

Statement of Joseph N. Mondello
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
June 13, 2018

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee: good morning. I am honored to appear before you today.

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to President Donald Trump for the faith and confidence he has placed in me. If confirmed, it will be an honor to represent our nation as Ambassador to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Before beginning my statement I would like to introduce to you my wife of 54 years, Linda Crabtree Mondello. Linda's support and love, particularly at the beginning of our marriage – when her hard work as a TWA flight attendant helped finance my legal education – has been the firm foundation upon which all that I have achieved in life – both personally and professionally – rests. I simply could not be more appreciative of all of her extraordinary sacrifices on my behalf. It is important to me that she shares this moment.

Being considered for the post of Ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is an extraordinary high point in my public service career.

I could never have envisioned, growing up in very modest circumstances in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York, that I would one day appear before the distinguished members of this committee seeking confirmation to one of the most important posts that our government can convey upon one of its citizens.

The neighborhood where I spent my childhood was a veritable United Nations of hard working men and women from virtually every ethnic background, race and creed, including from Trinidad and Tobago – there are about a quarter million Trinidadian-Americans in the United States – mostly in New York and New Jersey.

While these wonderful people differed in many ways, they were all united in their desire to achieve their own piece of the American dream for themselves and their families. I know that if they were here to witness this moment, my parents would be justifiably proud that their fine example has enabled their son to pursue a career that, in many respects, evokes the dreams and aspirations of generations of Americans who came to these shores in search of a better way of life.

My mother was a very religious woman whose family came to America from San German, Puerto Rico. She passed on to me a pride in her Spanish heritage that I have tried to instill in my own children and grandchildren. My father pursued a craft that has long since become extinct. He was a line-o-type operator for the Brooklyn Eagle, the Herald Tribune, and the New York Times. A proud union member, my father never missed an

opportunity to instill in me the value of hard work. Together they raised my sister and me in an environment where faith, family, and love of country governed our daily lives.

Determined to live by the example that they set for me, I embarked upon a career that offered me a wide range of experiences, including service as a school teacher, probation officer, government agent, assistant district attorney, local elected official, political leader, and private practicing attorney. I am very proud that I served my nation as a member of the US Army and the Air National Guard; and my state as a Major General in the New York Guard.

I am truly excited by the prospect of serving our nation again if I am confirmed as Ambassador to one of our most important Caribbean partners. I am firmly committed to advancing the long established goals of the U.S. Mission to Trinidad and Tobago and building on our partnership with the Trinbagonian government in the areas of security, prosperity, and energy.

Trinidad and Tobago is a vibrant and multi-cultural democracy that stands out in the Caribbean for its oil and gas fueled economic development. I will, if confirmed, work to facilitate stronger economic ties with a nation that, thanks to its large reserves of oil and natural gas, is already one of our nation's most important trading partners with a per capita GDP that, in this hemisphere, is only exceeded by Canada and the United States.

If confirmed, I will work diligently to promote U.S. exports, advocate for U.S. companies, and support the Trinidadian government in its effort to diversify the local economy beyond the energy sector into agricultural exports and the expansion of Trinidad and Tobago's role as a regional finance center. Another priority of mine will be to continue our strong security partnership, including through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, and to support the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's efforts in the fight against crime and illicit trafficking, as well as in counterterrorism cooperation.

Given my extensive background in law enforcement, public service and the law, I believe I possess the skills and experience necessary to build relationships and foster cooperative initiatives between our two nations in both the public and private sector.

If confirmed, the members of this committee can rest assured that I will work closely with Congress as we pursue our nation's long-standing goals in the Caribbean.

Thank you for your time and attention. Now I would be happy to answer any questions.