

**STATEMENT OF BRIAN A. NICHOLS
NOMINEE TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
MAY 19, 2021**

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the next Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to President Biden, Vice President Harris, and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me at this crucial moment in our Hemisphere.

The opportunity to appear before this committee for the third time as a nominee to serve the American people steels my resolve to fight for the values that our nation holds dear: democracy, the rule of law, and the innate dignity of every individual. With over 32 years serving our nation at some of our most challenging missions around the world, if confirmed I look forward to bringing all my skills and experience to bear in that fight. President Biden has said that *democracy holds the key to freedom, prosperity, peace, and dignity...And, if we work together with our democratic partners, with strength and confidence, we will meet every challenge and outpace every challenger*. My experience serving in our embassies in North, Central, and South America as well as directing our policy towards the Caribbean convinces me of the vital urgency of the President's words.

Our home, the Western Hemisphere, remains central to America's welfare, our prosperity, and our future. America's fortunes cannot be separated from those of our closest neighbors. If confirmed, I look forward to drawing on the enormous talent and dedication of the community of professionals within the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, as well as civil society throughout the Americas, our own private sector, and, of course, our Congress to advance America and the region's progress toward a more democratic, secure, and prosperous region.

I have spent most of my career within the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. If confirmed, I will strive to build an inclusive, compassionate, and diverse team that reflects our nation's prowess and professionalism. We will work to expand our engagement and partnerships throughout the Western Hemisphere—and especially with our closest neighbors Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean. The situation in Central America demands our urgent attention and unflagging efforts to promote democracy, prosperity, and security—addressing the root causes of irregular migration. The disastrous effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and

a recession in many countries have opened the door to malign influences from outside our region. We will build on the shared values, family ties, economic opportunities, and commitment to fundamental freedoms to counter those malign actors and deliver a better future for the people of our region.

My professional achievements owe to the women who surround me: my wonderful wife Geri, a retired Senior Foreign Service Officer, my talented daughters Alex and Sophie, and my brilliant mother Mildred. They have pushed me to be a better person, sacrificed for my career, and nurtured me with their love and support. In 1959, my late father began our family's adventure in diplomacy and foreign affairs, serving as a Fulbright Scholar, then partnering with the U.S. Information Agency on various projects in Europe, and helping to start the American studies program at the Free University of Berlin.

My own past assignments provide rich experience, should the Senate confirm me to serve as Assistant Secretary. During my tenure as Ambassador to Zimbabwe, I have fought tenaciously for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. I have led my team in responding to the multi-dimensional humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe. As Ambassador to Peru, I led a large mission that focused on improving the rule of law, fighting transnational crime and corruption, and promoting respect for human rights, particularly of women, girls, and disadvantaged groups. I also led a unified mission initiative to promote American businesses and grow American jobs, earning the Department's Charles Cobb Award for those efforts.

Prior to that, as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, I helped direct a team of nearly 7,000 professionals who work to expand access to justice, protect civilians, and combat crime around the world. I have hands-on experience shaping our rule of law programs in Mexico and Central America, as well as crafting innovative justice sector outreach to Afro-descendant and Indigenous populations in the Americas.

Should the Senate confirm me, I will aim to exemplify the highest standards of our great nation and strengthen our diplomacy. I look forward to partnering with you to advance America's interests in the Western Hemisphere.

I stand ready to answer any questions you might have now and in the future.

Thank you.