

Testimony of Roxanne Cabral
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of the Marshall Islands
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
October 29, 2019

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of the Marshall Islands. I am grateful to President Trump and Secretary Pompeo for their confidence in nominating me for this position, and I am equally grateful to receive your consideration.

With the Chairman's permission, I would like to present my family. My husband, David Schroeder, and sons, Roman and Evan, are watching via video from Panama. My eldest son Quinn, my brother Neal, my sister-in-law Sue Charlton and my niece Grace, and my mother and father-in-law, Nancy and Tom Schroeder, are present here. I would also like to thank all my family for their support during my career, especially my mother Nancy and sister Lisa, who inspired me to public service.

Over my 22-year career as a Foreign Service Officer, I have worked in Washington and around the world to promote U.S. interests and build strong partnerships. If confirmed, I will continue to draw on my leadership experience in regional policy, public diplomacy, and managing government institutions and programs to advance the United States' enduring strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific.

The Marshall Islands is a reliable partner that supports U.S. engagement in the region and U.S. strategic priorities globally. The Marshall Islands shares our positions on many important issues at the United Nations. The Marshall Islands is also one of Taiwan's 15 diplomatic partners and plays an important role in maintaining stability in cross-Strait relations. If confirmed, I will work to maintain our strong partnership and leverage the goodwill fostered in May of this year when President Trump met jointly with the Presidents of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau.

If confirmed, I will focus on three priorities: maintaining a strong security relationship; fostering economic prosperity and stability as our countries approach a critical juncture under the Compact of Free Association; and strengthening democratic institutions.

Mutual security of our nations is a core feature of our special relationship. The Marshall Islands hosts the U.S. Army's Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site, which provides critical testing support for our missile systems and also will serve as the location for our Space Fence, enabling the U.S. Air Force to locate and track the many objects orbiting Earth with more precision.

More broadly I will work to strengthen our ongoing partnership with the Marshall Islands to keep the Indo-Pacific region free and open, implement UN Security Council sanctions, promote maritime security, combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and tackle transnational crime.

If confirmed, I will work with the Marshall Islands government to advance sustainable economic development. The United States is the Marshall Islands' largest donor partner, is a key trading partner, and a contributor, along with Taiwan, to a jointly-managed Trust Fund established by the United States and the Marshall Islands, that will provide a source of revenue for the Marshall Islands in the coming decades. I will focus my efforts to be a responsible steward of taxpayer funds, advocating for the most effective use of U.S. assistance, while working to improve the investment climate to attract more private sector interest, and otherwise working with the Marshall Islands as they build a prosperous, healthy, and more self-sustaining future.

I recognize that the Marshall Islands, as a country with a maximum elevation of six feet above sea level, has profound concerns about the impacts of rising sea levels. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to support ongoing efforts to enhance resilience, and to engaging with the Marshall Islands on these issues.

If confirmed, my third goal would be to strengthen governance, rule of law, democratic institutions, and civil society through partnerships, technical assistance, and education and exchange programs. I look forward to working with the government and people of the Marshall Islands to expand opportunities, especially for future leaders, for exchanges between our two countries. I also recognize the already rich people-to-people ties that include service by Marshall Islands citizens in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Shared history and common values make our friendship with the Marshall Islands one of the strongest in the world, and if confirmed I look forward to continuing to work with the RMI on a host of issues of mutual concern to both our countries. The history of the nuclear testing program and the settlement of claims arising from that program are but one facet of the unique and longstanding relationship our two nations enjoy.

If confirmed, I will seek constructive, realistic approaches that will be grounded in areas of mutual agreement while respecting the differences we may have in the evaluation of such issues.

Mr. Chairman, in closing, I want to make a pledge to the committee to protect American interests, ensure fair treatment for U.S. citizens and their businesses, and to promote our values in every engagement I have.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today and am pleased to answer your questions.