

**Statement of William H. Duncan**  
**Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of El Salvador**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

**TBC**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of El Salvador.

I appreciate the privilege and responsibility to be considered for confirmation as ambassador. I deeply respect the role of the Senate in the work of ensuring that our nation has a foreign policy that reflects our values.

Please allow me to recognize my wife Nora and our daughters Clare, Irma Nora, and Laura and our grandson Ace. Let me also thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for this opportunity and their confidence in me.

My 30-year Foreign Service career has taken me to many countries, including El Salvador, Mexico, Colombia, and Paraguay, among others, and myriad domestic assignments. It has also given me the opportunity to work in service of U.S. policies supporting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

The relationship between the United States and El Salvador has been very close for the last four decades. Through a terrible civil war, a complex peace process, and into today's challenges such as fighting transnational organized crime and promoting prosperity, the United States has stood with El Salvador. And over those years, many Salvadorans have become our fellow citizens. Two and a half million Salvadorans now live here. They make an enormous contribution to our national story through their extraordinary creativity and work ethic and to El Salvador through billions of dollars in remittances returned each year.

I started my Foreign Service career at a small consulate on the U.S.-Mexico border. I learned there that there is no higher duty for us than the protection of U.S. citizens. If confirmed, that would be my number one priority.

We face a serious challenge from irregular migration from northern Central America, some of it from El Salvador. During many years in Mexico, I had the opportunity to learn what it means to make that trek. One thing is clear to me: it is a dangerous journey undertaken by desperate people. I know from living there that Salvadorans are proud. If they could make a better, safer, and more stable life in El Salvador, I believe most would choose to stay. If confirmed, I would do

everything in my power to see that the assistance provided by Congress to address the root causes of irregular migration is spent effectively.

And while we are not the only country offering assistance, we are notable for supporting and promoting the long-term well-being of our partners, as opposed to seeking our own short-term advantage. El Salvador has no better friend than the United States of America.

I know there are concerns about the strength and direction of El Salvador's democracy. While I will always act with respect for the sovereignty and dignity of the Government of El Salvador, if confirmed, I would be an advocate for democracy, human rights, and combating corruption and impunity. These are not only moral imperatives: they are the best guarantee for the long-term stability and prosperity of any country.

No country in the Western Hemisphere can alone successfully confront transnational organized crime. We must work together. Strengthening the rule of law in El Salvador is essential if we are going to discourage irregular migration. Without the rule of law, El Salvador will never have the economic growth it needs, nor will it be able to prevent human rights abuses and attacks on civil liberties, reduce gender-based violence, or defeat the threat from criminal gangs, all drivers of irregular migration.

Promoting the interests of U.S. businesses in El Salvador would also be a priority if I am confirmed. It is important to prosperity here at home, but I am also convinced U.S. businesses at their best set an example of transparency and fair dealing that will be emulated.

I have had the honor to serve in challenging leadership positions such as Deputy Chief of Mission in Mexico City. In that tour of duty and others, I was fortunate to work with the representatives of many U.S. government agencies. If confirmed, I would dedicate myself to the success of each U.S. agency's mission in El Salvador. I have also had the honor to work with fellow Americans and foreign national employees from a wide variety of backgrounds. We are a diverse nation and should have an overseas presence that proudly displays that diversity.

I look forward to this opportunity to advance America's interests in El Salvador if confirmed, and I stand ready to answer any questions you might have now and in the future. Thank you.