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**NOMINATIONS OF ROBERT BARBER,
GEORGE TSUNIS, COLLEEN BELL**

THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2014

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

Robert C. Barber, of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Iceland
George James Tsunis, of New York, to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway
Colleen Bradley Bell, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador to Hungary

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:34 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Chris Murphy presiding.

Present: Senators Murphy, Cardin, Kaine, Markey, Johnson, and McCain.

Also Present: Senator Charles E. Schumer.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRIS MURPHY,
U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT**

Senator MURPHY. Good afternoon, everyone. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will now come to order.

Today, the committee is considering three nominations—George Tsunis, to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway; Robert Barber, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Iceland; and Colleen Bell, to be Ambassador to Hungary.

Let me begin this afternoon by welcoming our nominees and welcoming your families. I will let you introduce any family members that may be here.

I am going to give some brief opening remarks, followed by Senator Johnson, our ranking member. I will introduce you. I understand that Senator Schumer is likely going to be here to introduce you, Mr. Tsunis. So if he is not here yet when we are done with our opening remarks, I will introduce Ms. Bell and Mr. Barber, and they might begin. And then when Senator Schumer comes here, he can introduce you, Mr. Tsunis. But we are glad to welcome Senator Schumer when he can arrive.

I want to congratulate all of you on your nominations. If confirmed, you are going to be called upon to serve and advance the interests of the American people in your respective missions. And

I thank you and your families for your willingness to serve this country in this important capacity.

The moment is unique in the sense that we have a number of irons in the fire with our European partners. You are going to be there at a very important time to talk about our communal mission to promote global security, whether it be as NATO partners or in our joint efforts to combat terrorism. You are going to be there at a really important time for the growing economic partnership between the United States and Europe, a moment at which we hope during your tenure we will negotiate and perhaps enter into a new trade agreement, now referred to as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

And we know that there is going to be continued interest in our very complicated, but very necessary intelligence relationship. I and a few members of the House were just in Europe over the holidays, talking about the importance of both clarifying our intelligence relationship going forward, but also preserving it because we have a communal interest to prevent grievous attacks against both the United States and Europe.

Mr. Tsunis, let me begin with a few words about Norway. The United States and Norway enjoy a long tradition of friendly relationships based on democratic values. We also share an increase in addressing the problems posed by climate change, particularly with respect to the Arctic and building a cooperation in the region through the Arctic Council.

On the security side, Norway, as you know, is a founding member of NATO, has been a partner with us in Afghanistan, Libya, the Balkans, and in counterterrorism. In her visit to Washington earlier this month, Norway's Defense Minister emphasized the importance of European nations stepping up to the plate at a larger scale to take a share of global political and economic burdens.

Norway is also the world's seventh-largest petroleum exporter, and the Norwegian economy has enjoyed some pretty impressive growth in recent years. So we look forward to hearing your thoughts on how to continue these very important partnerships with Norway, particularly in the lead-up to next year's NATO summit.

Mr. Barber, another nation that is very important to this committee is Iceland. The United States is one of Iceland's main foreign investors and trading partners. We were the first country to recognize Iceland's independence in 1944, following Danish rule.

It is another founding member of NATO. And although we no longer have U.S. military forces permanently stationed in Iceland, Iceland and the United States have worked closely again on missions in Afghanistan and Lebanon and the Balkans.

And as we talked about privately, the Icelandic economy has been a success story for much of the past two decades, although it encountered deep financial problems in 2008. The collapse of these major banks, coupled with the global financial crisis, it had a ripple effect throughout Iceland's economy, and we look forward to your thoughts on how the United States can continue to allow Iceland to recover.

And finally, Ms. Bell, let me turn to Hungary. Since the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, the United States and

Hungary have maintained strong bilateral ties, particularly in security matters through NATO. Hungary is a member of the European Union. It has successfully transitioned from a centrally planned economy to a market-based one since the fall of communism. Like the other countries represented here, the United States is among the top foreign investors in Hungary.

But notwithstanding our close cooperation on economic and security matters, there have been some legislative and constitutional changes in Hungary since 2010 that have prompted concerns from the United States and included controversial legislation granting citizenship to ethnic Hungarians living outside the country's borders, changes that could reduce the independence of Hungary's central bank, and restrictions on the constitutional court.

The United States has shared these concerns that have been expressed also by the Council of Europe, and we look forward to a discussion with you about how we can continue to work with Hungary on promoting democratic ideals.

We thank you all for being here today to share with us your thoughts. We look forward to your swift confirmation.

And let me now turn to our ranking member, Senator Johnson.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RON JOHNSON,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WISCONSIN**

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to join you in welcoming our nominees and also thanking you and your families for your willingness to serve. I appreciate the fact that you all took time to meet with me in my office, and as we discussed, these positions of ambassadorships is extremely important to not only convey to the countries that you are going to represent us Americans' exceptionalism, our values, but then also you report back to us the concerns that those countries have in terms of U.S. actions.

And so, incredibly important posts. I truly appreciate your willingness to serve, and I will look forward to your testimony.

Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Johnson.

Why do we not do this? I will introduce briefly Mr. Barber and Ms. Bell, and you can begin testimony. And when Senator Schumer gets here, he can introduce Mr. Tsunis.

Robert Barber is our nominee to be Ambassador to the Republic of Iceland. Mr. Barber, a leading attorney and litigator, has been a partner at Looney & Grossman in Boston, MA, since 1985. Known for his legal acumen and community service, he specializes in the needs of startup businesses, small and medium-sized companies, and commercial litigation, serving many companies in the role of outside general counsel. He is also an expert in the formation and early development of business ventures.

A proven and experienced leader, Mr. Barber will bring essential skills to the task of furthering bilateral economic relations with the Government of Iceland. Mr. Barber previously practiced law in a variety of other roles, including as an assistant district attorney in the New York County District Attorney's Office, and he has served in a number of community positions, as a trustee of the Phillips Brooks House Association of Harvard College, as a treasurer and

trustee of the Social Law Library in Boston, MA, and director of the Abbott Academy Association in Andover, MA.

He attended Harvard College and Boston University School of Law, and he even holds an MCRP from the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Welcome, Mr. Barber.

Ms. Bell, we are pleased to have you here today. Ms. Bell is a producer at Bell-Phillip Productions in Los Angeles, CA, has a strong history of accomplishment in the television industry. Known for her successful leadership of high-profile and influential social service, environmental, and arts organizations, she has a wealth of experience in a wide range of fields from the economy to human rights and the environmental, foreign policy, public health, and education. Ms. Bell will bring essential skills to the task of furthering our relationship with the Government of Hungary, who is a key U.S. ally in NATO and the EU.

Previously, Ms. Bell worked for Bell-Phillip Television Productions as an associate producer. She also serves on, again, a number of institutions. She has been on the board of the JFK Center for the Performing Arts, the President's Advisory Committee on the Arts, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Children's Institute, the Music Center, and the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, just to name a few.

Senator MURPHY. With that, why do we not do this? We will go to Mr. Barber for your opening remarks, then to Ms. Bell, and then we will have Senator Schumer here to introduce Mr. Tsunis.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT C. BARBER, OF MASSACHUSETTS,
TO BE THE AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF ICELAND**

Mr. BARBER. Chairman Murphy and Senator Johnson, it is a great privilege for me to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee for Ambassador to Iceland.

I am truly honored by this nomination and very grateful to the President and to Secretary Kerry for their trust in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with each of you and with your colleagues in Congress to further U.S. interests in Iceland.

My oldest son, Nicholas, is with me today, representing his brothers, Ben and Alexander, and my wife and his mom, Bonnie. And if you would permit me, I would like to introduce Nick to you.

Senator MURPHY. Welcome.

Mr. BARBER. I am also delighted that two members of the Icelandic Embassy are present today, and I very much appreciate their appearance today. I am pleased to meet them, and if confirmed, I certainly would look forward to working with them.

I am very thankful for and appreciate the support of my family and my friends.

The opportunity to serve the United States, if confirmed, means quite a lot to me. Both my father and my maternal grandfather were career Army officers. In fact, I was born at Fort Benning, GA.

I grew up in Charleston, SC, where the greatest influence on my life was my mother, Kathleen. A teacher, after having gone back to college while raising four kids, she guided gently, making sure I was aware of opportunities that were available to me and trusting me to make good decisions.

I feel as though I have been lucky all my life, being able to attain great schools on scholarships, which opened up even more wonderful opportunities. So knowing how lucky I have been, I look forward—I look for chances to help out, to pay back, and indeed to pay forward. And I believe that if I am confirmed, representing my country as the U.S. Ambassador to Iceland would be the ultimate opportunity for service.

I am hopeful, too, as the chairman mentioned, that my experience in leading organizations, including my law firm and as well as political and nonprofit groups, will enable me effectively to represent the United States. By nature, I am a team player, a firm believer in team development, for it is through collaborative effort that the most productive and, I believe, the most fulfilling outcomes are achieved.

As well, my years acting as outside general counsel to entrepreneurs and their companies, from startups to mid-sized firms, have helped me develop an ability to find solutions and to connect parties with common interests and complementary capacities.

The United States and Iceland have long enjoyed a strong bilateral relationship. When Iceland declared its independence on June 17, 1944, the United States, as you mentioned, was the first country to recognize it. In the last decade, this friendship has evolved from one dominated by political-military issues to a broader partnership that reflects our shared global agenda.

Iceland is a stalwart ally and friend of the United States. As a charter member of NATO, Iceland has made contributions to peace-keeping operations around the world. And although the Keflavik Naval Air Station closed in 2006, NATO continues to operate an important radar defense system in Iceland, highlighting that country's continuing contribution to our overall security.

A close partner on law enforcement issues, Iceland has recently helped break up the illegal narcotics network known as Silk Road and actively engages with the United States in antitrafficking in persons efforts. Iceland is also a staunch supporter of humanitarian causes, as its search and rescue teams provided lifesaving services following earthquakes around the world.

So following its banking sector crisis of 2008, Iceland is re-emerging with a stable economy. While it is still recovering, Iceland has made through a series of confidence-building measures steady progress in putting its economy on sounder footing.

Our business relations with Iceland are strong and growing. The reinvigorated American-Icelandic Chamber of Commerce is now up and running, working on behalf of American companies in Iceland. Raw materials and renewable energy are just some of the promising new horizons in our trade and investment relationship.

As businesses are looking to invest in Icelandic renewable energy, the United States and Iceland are cooperating to develop the technology we need for a green, sustainable future. And Iceland is also growing in importance as a potential strategic partner in the development of Arctic natural resources.

Iceland is a world leader in the use of geothermal and hydroenergy for electric power and heat generation, presents a great opportunity for energy diplomacy in the years ahead. If confirmed, I shall look for ways the United States can strengthen con-

nections among the energy industry, the Icelandic Government, and relevant U.S. institutions, and I shall diligently pursue all opportunities for collaboration.

In sum, Senators, the United States-Icelandic relationship yields benefits to both countries in security, in energy, trade and investment, the environment, and humanitarian causes. If confirmed, I will work to broaden our cooperation in these areas and to protect and further U.S. interests and safeguard American citizens.

Thank you again for the privilege of appearing before you today. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Barber follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT C. BARBER

Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Johnson, and distinguished members of the committee, it is a privilege to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee for Ambassador to Iceland. I am honored by this nomination, and very grateful to the President and to Secretary Kerry for their trust in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues in Congress to further U.S. interests in Iceland.

My oldest son, Nicholas, is with me today, representing his brothers, Ben and Alexander and his mother and my wife Bonnie Neilan, and if you would permit me, I introduce Nick to you.

The opportunity to serve the United States, if confirmed, means quite a lot to me. Both my father and my maternal grandfather were career Army officers; in fact I was born at Fort Benning, GA. I grew up in Charleston, SC, where the greatest influence in my life was my mother, Kathleen. A teacher, after having gone back to college while raising four kids, she guided gently, making sure I was aware of opportunities available to me, and trusting me to make good decisions. I feel I have been lucky all my life, being able to attend great schools on scholarships, which opened up more wonderful opportunities. So, knowing how lucky I have been, I look for chances to help out, to give back, to pay forward. I believe that, if I am confirmed, representing my country as the United States Ambassador to Iceland would be the ultimate opportunity for service.

I am hopeful that my experience in leading organizations, including my law firm, as well as political and nonprofit groups, will enable me to effectively represent the United States. I am a team player, a firm believer in team development, for it is through collaborative effort that the most productive, and fulfilling, outcomes are achieved. As well, my years acting as outside general counsel to entrepreneurs and their companies, from startups to midsize firms, have helped me develop an ability to find solutions and to connect parties with common interests and complementary capacities.

The United States and Iceland have long enjoyed a strong bilateral relationship. When Iceland declared its independence on June 17, 1944, the United States was the first country to recognize it. In the last decade, this friendship has evolved from one dominated by political-military issues to a broad partnership that reflects our shared global agenda.

Iceland is a stalwart ally and friend of the United States. As a charter member of NATO, Iceland has made contributions to peacekeeping operations around the world. Although the Keflavik Naval Air Station closed in 2006, NATO continues to operate an important radar defense system there, highlighting Iceland's continuing contribution to our overall security.

A close partner on law enforcement issues, Iceland most recently helped break up the illegal narcotics network known as Silk Road and actively engages with the United States on antitrafficking in persons efforts. It also works closely with the U.S. Coast Guard to improve port security for vessels transiting to the United States.

Iceland is a staunch supporter of humanitarian causes. Icelandic Search and Rescue teams have provided life-saving services following earthquakes around the world. Most recently, Iceland has provided monetary assistance through the U.N. to help Syrian refugees in Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon.

Following its banking sector crisis of 2008, Iceland is reemerging with a stable economy. While it is still recovering, Iceland has made, through a series of confidence-building measures, steady progress in putting its economy on sounder footing.

Our business relations with Iceland are strong and growing. The American-Icelandic Chamber of Commerce is now up and running, working on behalf of American businesses in Iceland. Raw materials and renewable energy are just some of the promising new horizons in our trade and investment relationship.

As businesses are looking to invest in Icelandic renewable energy, the United States and Iceland are cooperating to develop the technology we need for a green, sustainable future. Iceland is also growing in importance as a potential strategic partner in the development of Arctic natural resources. A world leader in the use of geothermal and hydroenergy for electric power and heat generation, Iceland presents a great opportunity for "energy diplomacy" in the years ahead.

If confirmed, I shall look for ways the United States can strengthen connections among the energy industry, the Icelandic Government, and relevant U.S. institutions, and I shall diligently pursue all opportunities for collaboration.

Mr. Chairman, the U.S.-Icelandic relationship yields benefits to both countries in security, energy, trade and investment, the environment, and humanitarian causes. If confirmed, I will work to broaden our cooperation in these areas and to protect and further U.S. interests and safeguard American citizens.

Thank you again for the privilege of appearing before you today. I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Barber.

Let me now welcome Senator Schumer here. So pleased to have you to introduce Mr. Tsunis. I know your time is limited. So we will allow you to introduce our next witness.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CHARLES E. SCHUMER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW YORK**

Senator SCHUMER. Thank you, Chairman Murphy and Ranking Member Johnson, Senator Markey.

And first, Mr. Chairman, it was not too long ago in this body that you would wait years and maybe even decades to become chairman of the European Affairs Subcommittee, and here you are, one of our brightest, most capable freshmen, chairing it already. Progress is being made, I would say to the public.

It is a privilege for me to introduce George Tsunis, the nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to Norway. Mr. Tsunis is a lifelong New Yorker, born and raised on Long Island. He currently lives in Cold Spring Harbor, and he has had a long and distinguished career in both public service and the private sector.

And that leaves no doubt he is well qualified to take on this great task that awaits him if he is confirmed as the next United States Ambassador to Norway. His career and commitment to the community is an exemplary one, and I believe that New Yorkers, and particularly those on Long Island, have greatly benefited from Mr. Tsunis' intelligence, his generosity, and his philanthropic pursuits. So he is an outstanding choice to be Ambassador to Norway, where he is going to represent the United States, should he be confirmed, in a country that values democracy and is a strong ally.

Mr. Tsunis is a lifelong Long Islander, raised in Commack. He attended Commack High School. I have given many a graduation speech there. He then earned his undergraduate degree at NYU, his juris doctor at St. Johns University.

He is born to parents who emigrated from Greece. He is like so many New Yorkers, comes from overseas and just in one generation becomes an American and contributes so much to this great country of ours.

He is a true tale of the American dream. He has never forgotten his roots. He is very active in the Greek American community. He

is an archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchic in the Greek Orthodox Church, the highest lay honor, serves as the national counsel of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. And he and I are the grand marshals of the Greek Independence Day Parade in New York City in March. Yiasou.

A highly successful entrepreneur and philanthropist, Mr. Tsunis first started out as an attorney where he rose through the ranks to become a partner in Long Island's largest law firm. He has also had an illustrious career in public service as an attorney. He was a legislative attorney on the New York City Council, special counsel to the town of Huntington's Environmental and Open Space Committee, and counsel to the Dix Hills Water District.

Today, he is chairman and CEO of Chartwell Hotels, which owns, develops, and manages Hilton, Marriott, Intercontinental Hotels across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic United States, and he has also been very active in foreign policy issues. He is a member of Brookings Institution's Foreign Policy Leadership Committee and its Metropolitan Leadership Council and is a director of Business Executives for National Security.

So he has been extremely successful in the hotel and real estate businesses, but what is most impressive about Mr. Tsunis is the time, investment, and commitment he has shown to the people of New York, people of Long Island particularly, who suffered tremendously as a result of Superstorm Sandy.

His philanthropic efforts and humanitarian causes have had a tremendous impact. As a result, he has received a number of well-deserved honors from groups as diverse as Dowling College, Long Island Cares, WLIW Channel 21, the Long Island Children's Museum. The Cyprus Federation's Justice for Cyprus Award he received, presented personally by President of Cyprus Christofias.

He has made generous contributions to Stony Brook for the creation of the George and Olga Tsunis Center in Hellenic Studies and the James and Eleni Tsunis Chair in Hellenic Studies. The latter are in honor of his parents.

In short, he is just a perfect candidate for Ambassador. He is smart. He is successful. He is practical. He has a knowledge of foreign affairs. He has a generous heart.

I know him. I know George a long time. We are good friends, and I can tell you that all of these nice things that it says in his biography do not equal the goodness of the man. He is just a decent, honorable, caring person.

And that matters a lot when you are Ambassador. Because when the people of a country, particularly a relatively small country like Norway, see who you are, they are going to understand and have a special appreciation. So I think he is going to be a great Ambassador to a very important relationship, that between United States and Norway.

We work closely as NATO allies, trading partners. U.S. companies invest in Norway in critical products. And so, this is a great nomination, and I would urge the committee to approve him with alacrity and with unanimity.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Senator Schumer. Thank you for being here.

And with that ringing introduction, Mr. Tsunis, the floor is yours.

**STATEMENT OF GEORGE JAMES TSUNIS, OF NEW YORK,
TO BE THE AMBASSADOR TO THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY**

Mr. TSUNIS. Thank you, Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Johnson—

Thank you, Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Johnson, and esteemed members of the committee.

Let me first thank Senator Schumer, who has been a mentor. I thank him for his support, his guidance, his imprimatur. It has been very meaningful to me.

I am both honored and humbled to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway. I thank the President for his trust and confidence in me, and I am grateful to this committee for considering my nomination.

I am also grateful for this opportunity to serve our country, and I would be remiss in not acknowledging a few of the many people who have made this journey possible.

First, my parents, who emigrated to this country of opportunity and meritocracy, seeking to build a better life for their family. My parents sacrificed a lot to give my sisters and I the opportunities they never had. So it is with gratitude that I acknowledge my mom today. I would have loved to introduce her, but she had recently been in the hospital. My mom, Eleni, who had the foresight and determination to ensure that my sisters and I received a sound education and a reservoir of love.

Today, I would also like to remember my father, James, who passed away 12 years ago. My dad was the embodiment of the American dream, starting out as a busboy at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City, eventually opening his own small coffee shop and then a landmark restaurant that we still operate 43 years later.

He has embraced our country with open arms, teaching my sisters, Anastasia and Vicki, both who are public school teachers, the importance of hard work, the value of a good education, which is America's great equalizer.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my wife, Olga, and our three children, James, Eleni, and Yanna, who are behind me, this afternoon. They are my bedrock of support and living reminders of the legacy my parents started here in the United States.

After attending law school, I worked in government, as an associate in a small law firm, and then as a partner in a large law firm until I founded Chartwell Hotels. During my tenure as CEO, Chartwell not only weathered this great recession, but experienced unprecedented growth. It taught me how to operate in a stressful environment.

My company's success was not the result of one person's effort. Whether public or private, a successful organization is built through teamwork and a collaborative sense of mission. If confirmed, I will draw on this experience to make the best case for my country, cognizant that I will be working with a terrific American and Norwegian team at Embassy Oslo.

Throughout my career, I have maintained a strong interest in foreign and economic affairs. I have had the pleasure of contributing to public policy as a member of the Brookings Institution Foreign Policy Leadership Committee and as a trustee of Business Executives for National Security. If confirmed, I look forward to putting these experiences to work for the American people.

We share strong bilateral ties with Norway, steeped in shared values, such as commitment to promoting human rights, democracy, and freedom throughout the world. Norway is a proactive global peace builder. Its influence and reputation in the international community far exceed its size.

The most notable of these efforts are, of course, the Oslo Accords, although Norway has mediated a number of prominent conflicts. Norway is a strong supporter of the current negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, which I believe reflects Norway's strong desire to contribute to world peace and its reputation as an honest arbiter.

As a cofounder of NATO, Norway is a reliable and fully engaged ally. American and Norwegian soldiers fought together and have stood together in Afghanistan to support its transformation into a sovereign and secure nation.

During NATO's operations in Libya, Norwegian F-16s were amongst the alliance's most effective air assets. Norway will further deepen its commitment to military readiness and interoperability with U.S. forces through its plan to purchase 52 Joint Strike Fighters from Lockheed Martin, something I deem of great importance.

Norway is an important business partner of the United States, and if confirmed, I will seek to expand the U.S. economic export opportunities and create American jobs. I will also work to deepen people-to-people ties between Norway and the United States through public diplomacy efforts. If confirmed, I will also seek to strengthen what is already a very strong relationship between our two countries and maintain the Embassy's proud tradition.

As I mentioned at the start, at my core, I am grateful for this opportunity to serve my country. I have an obligation to give back, and I look forward to answering any questions you have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tsunis follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GEORGE J. TSUNIS

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Johnson, and esteemed members of the committee, I am both honored and humbled to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway. I thank the President for his trust and confidence in me, and I am grateful to this committee for considering my nomination. I am also grateful for this opportunity to serve our country, and I would be remiss in not acknowledging a few of the many people who have made this journey possible. First my parents, who immigrated to this country of opportunity and meritocracy, seeking to build a better life for their family. My parents sacrificed a lot to give my two sisters and me the opportunities they never had. So it is with gratitude that I introduce my mother, Eleni, who had the foresight and determination to ensure that my sisters and I received a sound education and a reservoir of love.

Today I would also like to remember my father, James, who passed away 12 years ago. My dad was the embodiment of the American dream, starting out as a busboy at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City, eventually opening his own small coffee shop and then a landmark restaurant that is still open today, 42 years later. He embraced our country with open arms, teaching his children the importance of hard work, family, and the value of a good education. These are not lessons that I or my

sisters, Anastasia and Vicki, took lightly. My sisters took that lesson one step further and became public school teachers. Most importantly, I would like to thank my wife, Olga, and our three children James, Eleni, and Yanna, who are my bedrock of support and living reminders of the legacy my parents started here in the United States.

After attending law school, I worked in government, as an associate in a small law firm, and then as a partner in a large firm, until I followed my father into the world of business and entrepreneurship when I founded Chartwell Hotels. During my tenure as CEO, Chartwell not only weathered the recession but experienced unprecedented growth. Having personally witnessed the strength and resiliency of U.S. business and its success in the international marketplace, I feel I understand the importance of expanding our global business and trade.

My company's success was not the result of one person's effort. Whether public or private, a successful organization is built through teamwork and a collaborative sense of mission. If I am confirmed, I will draw on this experience to make the best case for my country, cognizant that I will be working with a terrific American and Norwegian team at Embassy Oslo.

Throughout my career, I have maintained a strong interest in foreign and economic affairs, and I've had the pleasure of contributing to public policy as a member of the Brookings Institution's Foreign Policy Leadership Committee and as a trustee with the Business Executives for National Security. If confirmed, I look forward to putting this experience to work for the American people.

We share strong bilateral ties with Norway, in large part because we share a commitment to promoting human rights, democracy, and freedom throughout the world. Norway is a proactive, global peace-builder and for a country of just 5 million people, its influence and reputation in the international community far surpasses its size. The most notable of these efforts is the Oslo Accords, although Norway has mediated a number of prominent conflicts, including those in Sri Lanka and Colombia. Norway is a strong supporter of the current negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. This reflects Norway's strong desire to contribute to world peace, and its reputation as an honest arbitrator.

In addition to peace and reconciliation efforts, Norway is a generous contributor to international development and humanitarian relief efforts. Norway is a strong partner on environmental matters, and a leader in the area of global climate change. With our common strategic interest in the Arctic, Norway is a natural partner in these fields. If confirmed, I will work to preserve and expand this invaluable partnership with Norway.

A cofounder of NATO, Norway is a reliable ally. American and Norwegian soldiers and civilians have stood together in Afghanistan to support its transformation to a safe, sovereign, and secure nation. During NATO operations in Libya in 2011, Norwegian F-16s were among the alliance's most effective air assets. Norway will further deepen its commitment to military readiness and interoperability with U.S. forces through its plans to purchase 52 Joint Strike Fighters from Lockheed Martin.

Norway is an important business partner of the United States. We are Norway's sixth-largest trading partner and our trade relationship is free of major disputes. My focus, if I am confirmed, will be expanding economic development opportunities both for U.S. companies in Norway, and encouraging Norwegian firms' investments in the United States. The energy sector is at the heart of the U.S.-Norwegian economic relationship, and it is expected that U.S. energy companies will expand their interests in the Norwegian oil and gas sector, creating new export opportunities and jobs for American businesses.

With the Senate's confirmation, I will work to expand European support for the transatlantic relationship to deepen people-to-people ties between Norway and the United States. I will give my full support to public diplomacy efforts to reach out to people throughout Norway and to provide educational exchange opportunities for Norwegians to study in the United States, and expand these opportunities wherever possible. There is no better way to build understanding than to expose someone directly to life in America and direct engagement with the American people.

If confirmed, I will work side by side with my outstanding Embassy team to strengthen this already strong relationship between our two countries and maintain the Embassy's proud tradition, serving U.S. interests. As I mentioned at the start, at my core I am grateful for this opportunity to serve my country—I have an obligation to give back—and I look forward to answering any questions you have.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Tsunis.
Now finally, Ms. Bell, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF COLLEEN BRADLEY BELL, OF THE DISTRICT
OF COLUMBIA, TO BE THE AMBASSADOR TO HUNGARY**

Ms. BELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Johnson, and distinguished members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

It is an honor for me to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to Hungary. I am deeply grateful for the confidence and trust that President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me. I am humbled by this opportunity, and if confirmed, I will proudly represent our country abroad.

With the chairman's permission, I would like to acknowledge some of my family members. I would particularly like to thank my husband, Bradley, and our four children—Chasen, Caroline, Charlotte, and Oliver—for their steadfast and unwavering support in this new endeavor.

I would also like to thank my father, who is here with me today. A former United States Marine, he instilled in me the importance of hard work and integrity in achieving my goals. My passion for public service is driven by our shared hopes for a better world for our next generation, a world that we build with the friendship and cooperation of our partners and allies.

Hungary is a strong ally of the United States. We enjoy a close partnership embedded in our common commitment to two bedrock Transatlantic organizations, the OSCE and NATO. Inspired by shared interests and common values, Hungary has been a generous and reliable contributor to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Hungary also contributes peacekeeping troops to the international mission in Kosovo and to EU operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Hungary has been an active and constructive supporter of U.S. efforts to broker a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestine Authority and of the ongoing international program to disarm the Syrian chemical weapons program. Police and civilian security cooperation has been excellent, as exemplified by the presence of the U.S.-sponsored International Law Enforcement Academy in Budapest.

Last year marked the 90th anniversary of the United States-Hungarian diplomatic relations. That anniversary gave us an opportunity to celebrate and reflect on our partnership, a relationship which extends beyond our common interest in security as NATO allies, and is anchored by deep economic ties and common values shared by the citizens of our two nations.

At the same time, we have been open over the last 2 years about our concerns about the state of checks and balances in Hungary and the independence of some key institutions. Many argue that sweeping legislative and constitutional changes have hurt the international investment climate, undermined property rights, weakened the judiciary, and centralized power in the hands of the executive.

The United States has not been alone in this regard. The perceived erosion of democratic checks and balances has garnered scrutiny from various bodies within the European Union. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to uphold American and European democratic values, to express our concerns where appropriate, and

to urge our Hungarian partners to work collaboratively with international partners and civil society on these issues.

The idea of pluralism is integral to our understanding of what it means to be a democracy. Democracies recognize that no one entity, no state, no political party, no leader will ever have all the answers to the challenges we face. And depending on their circumstances and traditions, people need the latitude to work toward and select their own solutions.

Our democracies do not and should not look the same. Governments by the people, for the people, and of the people will reflect the people they represent. But we all recognize the reality and importance of these differences. Pluralism flows from these differences.

The United States has also expressed concern about the rise of extremism, which, unfortunately, is a trend not unique to Hungary. However, the rise in Hungary of extremist parties is of particular concern. If confirmed, protecting and promoting a climate of tolerance will be one of my key priorities.

The Hungarian Government has undertaken a series of steps to address lingering hatred and the legacy of the Holocaust to include planned events in 2014 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the large-scale deportation to Auschwitz and the 2015 assumption of the presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. If confirmed, I look forward to working with government organizations, civic and religious groups, and other stakeholders to confront and to beat prejudice and hatred in all of its forms.

We have enjoyed and benefited from our close relationship with Hungary for over 90 years. Just as we continue to work together in Afghanistan and around the world to uphold freedom and democracy, so, too, will we work to maintain an open and at times difficult dialogue on the importance of upholding our shared values at home.

I bring to the table two decades of experience as a businesswoman, executive manager, and leader in the nonprofit arena. As a producer, I have been an integral part in developing a U.S. product that we export to more than 100 countries for the daily consumption of over 40 million viewers.

The demands of producing a daily show have honed my managerial skills and required me to carefully coordinate the diverse activities of a very large staff. My work in the nonprofit sector has left me with a deep appreciation for the role and the importance of civil society in a healthy democracy.

If confirmed, I will give the highest priority to ensuring the well-being of U.S. citizens living, working, and traveling in Hungary, and I will also seek opportunities to enhance our cooperation on international security issues and to expand commercial opportunities for American firms while also firmly promoting and protecting our shared values and principles.

If confirmed, I pledge to do my best in advancing America's interests and values. I look forward to working with this committee and Congress in that effort.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF COLLEEN BRADLEY BELL

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Johnson, and distinguished members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

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Thank you, again, for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Ms. Bell.

Just to my colleagues, I told all of our nominees here not to be disappointed if it was only Senator Johnson and I here today, and I just want to assure you that this is not a coordinated sneak attack on this panel to have five Senators. [Laughter.]

Let me direct my first question to Mr. Tsunis and Mr. Barber because two countries that you are going to be representing us in have some common concerns in the Arctic region, and given that Iceland has chosen not, for the time being, to align themselves with the EU, they do that in part because they see themselves as a gateway to the Arctic for a variety of industries and resources.

Of course, Norway has had a connection, historic connection to the Arctic. And as a neighbor of Russia, also wonder what their views are on Russia's new \$600 billion military modernization and increased activity in the Arctic.

So I wonder if you might both talk a little bit about how Norway and Iceland view the future of governance in the Arctic and perhaps how the United States and both of these countries can work together as we try to figure out a pathway forward?

Mr. TSUNIS. Thank you for your question, Mr. Chairman.

Governance in the Arctic in Norway's view is through the Arctic Council. It was established in 1996. Norway is one of eight full-fledged members on the council. Actually, it was very important to Norway that the permanent Secretariat to the council be located in Tromsø, which occurred last year.

The Arctic is a very important foreign policy priority for both the United States and Norway. As oil and gas continue to be found as we go further up the Norwegian Continental Shelf, there are tremendous opportunities for both the United States, Norway, and our respective companies in those fields. There are also shipping lanes, which are now starting to open up, and that could mean very significant trade opportunities for both our countries.

As regarding Russia, Norway has always had a posture of constructive engagement. I will tell you there is some concern with problems in their civil society, problems in restricting their media, an uneven business climate at times, and the military buildup that you mentioned. But it continues to have constructive engagement.

And last year, both former Presidents of Russia and Norway entered into a cross-border cooperation, the Barents Euro Cooperation Agreement. And I think that was a very positive step.

So, clearly, if confirmed, I am going to look to continue my engagement with Norway on all of these issues and to work with them in constructive engagement with Russia.

Senator MURPHY. Mr. Barber.

Mr. BARBER. Senator, I will add just briefly to Mr. Tsunis' comments and reinforce the comment that you, yourself, made, as well as Mr. Tsunis, that the United States and Iceland share an identity as Arctic nations, and they are two of the eight Arctic Council members. The Arctic Council has a mission to promote cooperation and coordination among its member states, including the six others, and this is a forum in which the United States believes it is important to engage not only with Iceland, but the other Arctic nations on issues that are of common importance to them.

Senator MURPHY. Ms. Bell, you touched briefly on the same subject that I talked about with respect to Hungary, which is some of these concerning developments regarding the rollback of certain democratic institutions and the relative independence of the bank and of the court.

And I do not want to overstate the concern as you look at each one of these issues individually, but when you roll them all together, one of the worries is that it starts to create a little bit of a dangerous precedent within the OSCE and within NATO, as we are preaching to people who want to join these associations as to the democratic reforms that they have to undertake. It is a little bit difficult when you look at the totality of what is happening in Hungary to continue to hold that line.

So we do not normally get into the business of telling our European partners through our embassies what they should be doing with respect to internal and domestic policy. So what do you think our levers are here? What is the appropriate intervention, the appropriate push and pull that we can give our partners in Hungary as they work through the future of some of these issues?

Ms. BELL. Thank you, Senator.

If confirmed, one of the key priorities will be to build upon the mutually beneficial economic, diplomatic, and security partnership that we have with Hungary. At the same time, there are governance issues that have been addressed over the past 2 years. And these have not come strictly from the United States, but they have also been concerns that have been expressed by the European Union.

As you mentioned, this erosion of checks and balances and the centralization of executive authority and also the freedom of and independence of the judiciary. And to name another would be media freedom. I absolutely do think that given the fact that Hungary is a strong and valued NATO ally of ours, a strong ally means an ally who has strong democracy in existence.

So this is not always an easy conversation to have, but it is a necessary one. And if confirmed, I will continue to participate in a constructive and effective dialogue with our Hungarian partners about the values necessary to maintain and build a robust democracy.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.

Senator JOHNSON.

Senator JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I guess I would just like to go down the table there and just ask a question from your standpoint. What are the greatest commercial opportunities we have with the country you are going to be Ambassador to, if confirmed?

Mr. Barber, I will start with you.

Mr. BARBER. Thank you, Senator Johnson.

I think that Iceland is a country remarkable, for one, in its pioneering and innovation in the development of renewable power, geothermal and hydropower. Indeed, 85 percent of all energy used is sourced from renewables.

Iceland is fortunate that its geological location is such that these resources are pretty readily available. But beyond that, Iceland has utilized its own ingenuity and resourcefulness of its peoples to develop these resources, to develop the technology to exploit them.

And there are a number of both scientific collaborations that are in place as we speak, as between our two countries, our governments, and indeed between and among commercial enterprises in both countries to develop this technology and to employ it not only in Iceland, not only in the United States, but actually in other places around the world. There is great potential there, and that is just simply one area where I hope that our countries can work together.

Senator JOHNSON. So there are opportunities for us to import the advanced technology from Iceland or vice versa, that they actually would be importing technology from the United States?

Mr. BARBER. I would say both, quite frankly, Senator. But the Icelanders are out in front of the rest of the world in the effort to exploit geothermal renewable energy power here.

Senator JOHNSON. Mr. Tsunis, you talked about obviously Norway and oil. Are there other opportunities there between our two countries?

Mr. TSUNIS. Sure. Although the heart of our business ties are in the energy field, there are—we have a \$15 billion annual trade partnership with Norway. It is very important to them. We are their fifth-largest trading partner.

There are 300 businesses that are currently operating in Norway. Sixty percent of our investments in Norway have to do with energy, and there is a huge, huge American community in Stavanger there.

But in this trade relationship, we have a slight deficit in manufactured goods. We have a slight surplus in services, but there are a lot of things that we will be getting to—there are a lot of markets that will continue to open up.

Senator JOHNSON. Well, let me just ask, as Ambassador, how would you promote those trade cooperations?

Mr. TSUNIS. Thank you for that save, Senator Johnson.

There has—prior Ambassadors have been very, very engaged in this issue. It is important that we continue—interesting.

Senator JOHNSON. Let me move on to Ms. Bell.

Mr. TSUNIS. Please, thank you.

Senator JOHNSON. What are you looking at in terms of those commercial opportunities between the United States and Hungary?

Ms. BELL. Thank you very much for the question.

The United States and Hungary have a strong commercial and business relationship. Nine billion dollars of U.S. investment are in Hungary right now. There will be opportunities to increase our trade relationship. I look forward to advocating for TTIP and ultimately using TTIP as a tool to promote the trade relationship, which will ultimately grow U.S. jobs and simultaneously improve the Hungarian economy.

I look to work—I think there are opportunities, business and commercial opportunities in a variety of different business sectors in Hungary. I will look to promote commercial opportunities for U.S. businesses in manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, health and welfare, and energy at some point.

Senator JOHNSON. Ms. Bell, you talked about in your testimony the rise in Hungary of extremist parties, that that was a particular concern. Can you just describe that in a little more, greater detail?

Ms. BELL. Yes. Thank you very much, Senator, for the opportunity to touch on this.

It is important for us to continue to confront bigotry and intolerance at all times. There is an extremist group in Hungary. They are the third-largest political party in Hungary, and they hold 11 percent of the seats in Parliament. They are responsible for a large percentage of the incidents of anti-Semitism and the vitriolic language that is coming out of Hungary.

The Hungarian Government has stated that they will not cooperate with this party, Jobbik Party. Embassy Budapest and the United States has clearly and consistently expressed to the Hungarian Government the need to condemn these incidences immediately.

I do believe and I hope that there is a chance that these—with the improvement in the economy and an engaged citizenry and effective diplomacy that we can reduce these rates.

Senator JOHNSON. OK. Well, thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And let me thank all three of our nominees for their willingness to serve our country. It is not easy. It will demand a lot of time and certainly family sacrifice. So I thank you all, and I thank your families for your willingness.

In all three of the countries that you have been nominated to represent the United States, they are all members of the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. I had the honor of chairing the U.S.-Helsinki Commission, which is the U.S. participation in the OSCE.

The OSCE is the largest regional organization by number of countries in the world. It includes both the United States and Russia, which gives us a unique opportunity to advance the good governance issues that Ms. Bell was talking about as it relates to Hungary. I think it is fair to say that Norway and Iceland are strong members that share the U.S. commitment in all those areas and are our key allies.

In regards to Hungary, which is a key strategic U.S. ally, as you point out—no question about that, a NATO partner—their commitments to the Helsinki principles are somewhat of concern.

Ms. Bell, you mentioned in your statement the fact that their constitutional and statutory changes are problematic. You were a little diplomatic in your written statement. I think much stronger in your response to our questions, which I appreciate very much. Maybe you are learning diplomacy.

But let me point out that Hungary is a friend, and we have an obligation to be pretty direct about this. And what is happening in Hungary today is very concerning. You mentioned the Jobbik Party, which is the third-largest party, as you point out, in Hungary. And it is true that the government has not embraced the Jobbik Party, but they have not condemned it. They played politics with it locally.

So we have not seen the strong government action that we would like to see. Instead, we see activities taking place in Hungary that really raises major concern for us. They are now setting up this museum to commemorate the German occupation of Hungary. And quite frankly, there is major concern here because it looks like it is trying to say that everything that happened in Hungary during World War II was the responsibility of the Germans, whereas we know there were many Hungarians that were complicit as to what happened in Hungary during World War II.

And I mention that because, yes, we have seen, as you point out in your statement, the rise of extremism. It is not just Jews and Jewish community in Hungary. It is the Roma community, which is being very much singled out.

And we have seen a rise of anti-Semitism and extremism, but we found governments have stood up against it. And in Hungary, we are concerned that we have not seen the strength in its government to condemn those activities.

So if you are confirmed as our Ambassador, you have got to be a strong voice on this. You cannot equivocate at all. And to know that if the relationship between our two countries will continue to grow stronger, we expect their government to take action and not just to say one thing to the local constituency in Hungary and another thing to our Ambassador.

So I will give you one more opportunity to respond on this. I very much appreciate your responses to Senator Murphy and Senator Johnson. I think they were right on. But I hope you understand that you have a responsibility to be very direct when a friend is not taking the right course.

Ms. BELL. Thank you very much, Senator Cardin.

I do understand this, and I appreciate the responsibility that I will be taking, if confirmed. You have my word that I will continue to maintain a very strong and constructive dialogue with the Hungarian Government about the importance of drowning out this hate speech and these incidences of anti-Semitism.

And as I mentioned, the Government of Hungary did say that they would not engage with Jobbik, and this is something that we will hold them at their word.

Thank you.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you.

I hope also you will work closely with us in Congress and keep us informed and be prepared to accept advice from us as this issue unfolds because it is a major concern.

Mr. Tsunis, I have known of your record for a long time, and I thank you for being willing to allow your talent to be used to represent our country in Norway. It is a very important country, and as you have pointed out, the opportunities between our countries only can get stronger.

Mr. Barber, Iceland is a very interesting country and I think maybe may lead the world in its ability to take care of its energy needs with renewable sources. And it offers incredible opportunity for us, and of course, it is pretty close by. So it really is a country that we think can become a much stronger ally.

We have had some difficulties on military facilities, but it seems to me that there is a lot of promise for growth, and we thank you very much for your willingness to step forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Barber, I take it you have been to Iceland?

Mr. BARBER. Sir, I have not. I have not had the privilege yet. I look forward to—

Senator MCCAIN. Mr. Tsunis, have you been to Norway?

Mr. TSUNIS. I have not.

Senator MCCAIN. I guess, and Ms. Bell, have you been to Hungary?

Ms. BELL. Yes, Senator, I have.

Senator MCCAIN. When?

Ms. BELL. I was in Hungary in March.

Senator MCCAIN. Good. Thank you.

Ms. Bell, do you think that United States-Hungarian relations are in a good place?

Ms. BELL. Senator, thank you very much for this important question.

I think that there are aspects of our bilateral relationship that are very strong. We do have a strong military cooperation. Law enforcement cooperation is also very strong. Hungary works on a variety of different peacekeeping missions in Kosovo and a long-term peacekeeping mission in the Balkans, and also they have provided troops to Afghanistan and continue to do so.

That being said, I do think that there is opportunity to improve the bilateral relationship. I think that there are a variety of ways of doing so and are not necessarily all mutually exclusive.

If confirmed, I look—

Senator MCCAIN. For example?

Ms. BELL. For example, to work to build the military cooperation that we do have at this point and also promote business opportunities for U.S. companies and also continue to work these governance issues, discuss these governance issues.

Senator MCCAIN. So what would you be doing differently from your predecessor, who obviously had very rocky relations with the present government?

Ms. BELL. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the broad range of society—

Senator MCCAIN. My question was what would you do differently?

Ms. BELL. Senator, in terms of what I would do differently from my predecessor—

Senator MCCAIN. That was the question.

Ms. BELL [continuing]. Kounalakis, well, what I would like to do, if confirmed, I would like to work toward engaging civil society in a deeper, in a deeper—

Senator MCCAIN. Obviously, you do not want to answer my question. Do you think democracy is under threat in Hungary?

Ms. BELL. I think that there are absolutely signs of an erosion of checks and balances in Hungary. I do think that. I think that there is a centralization of executive authority that has taken place. I do think that the media freedoms are compromised.

Senator MCCAIN. Do you think our—what are our strategic interests in Hungary?

Ms. BELL. Well, we have—our strategic interests, in terms of what are our key priorities in Hungary, I think our key priorities are to improve upon, as I mentioned, the security relationship and also the law enforcement and to promote business opportunities, increase trade.

Senator MCCAIN. I would like to ask again what our strategic interests in Hungary are.

Ms. BELL. Our strategic interests are to work collaboratively as NATO allies, to work to promote and protect the security for both countries and for the world, to continue working together on the cause of human rights around the world, to build that side of our relationship while also maintaining and pursuing some difficult conversations that might be necessary in the coming years.

Senator MCCAIN. Great answer.

Mr. Tsunis, following last year's parliamentary elections, Norway's conservative party now had a center-right coalition, as you know, that will include the anti-immigration party called the Progress Party. What do you think the appeal of the Progress Party was to the Norwegian voters?

Mr. TSUNIS. Thank you, Senator. That is a very seminal question.

Generally, Norway has and is very proud of being a very open, transparent, and democratic parliamentary government. One of the byproducts of being such an open society and placing such a value on free speech is that you get some fringe elements that have a microphone, that spew their hatred, and although I will tell you Norway has been very quick to denounce them, we are going to continue to work with Norway to make sure—

Senator MCCAIN. The government has denounced them? They are part of the coalition of the government.

Mr. TSUNIS. Well, I would say—you know what?

Senator MCCAIN. I doubt seriously that they—

Mr. TSUNIS. I stand corrected. I stand corrected. I stand corrected and would like to leave my answer at they are—it is a very, very open society and that most Norwegians, the overwhelming amount of Norwegians and the overwhelming amount of people in Parliament do not feel the same way.

Senator MCCAIN. I have no more questions for this incredibly highly qualified group of nominees.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you.

Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Barber, talk a little bit about—and I am sorry that I missed your opening statement. But just talk a little bit about the state of the Icelandic economy recovery after the financial collapse. I know it affected Iceland in a very significant way. So what is the current economic status in the country?

Mr. BARBER. Well, Senator, thanks for the question.

And I can tell you that from the depths of the fall of 2008 and the extreme difficulties that both the banks and the country as a whole experienced as a result of the financial collapse, Iceland has recovered thus far remarkably well. It has now modest, though positive GDP growth, reduced unemployment, and inflation is now in check.

All of those are parts of the problems that the country experienced in 2008, 2009, and indeed into 2010. They have got a ways to go, but as there are still some capital controls that are in place, restrictions on money leaving the country, and some credit issues still to be tackled on the commercial side, on the home residential side. But they are making great progress, and there are several indicators that are looking very positive.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Barber, one of the things that, you know, when I hear Americans talk about Iceland, most often Iceland is in a sentence or paragraph dealing with a place to go to see the effects of climate change, you know, if I talk to colleagues in the United States. So I know in the United States there is a significant awareness of climate issues in Iceland, and Iceland is sort of an example.

Talk a little bit about, to the extent that you can, about the sort of internal—is there a lot of internal environmental activism in Iceland around climate issues? Because we are grappling at the congressional level of moving from talking about it to what the right policies are. I am kind of interested into how big an issue is that inside Icelandic society.

Mr. BARBER. Well, I think it is. I think that Icelanders and citizens of the United States share a great number of values, and some of those are in the arena of the climate and the changing nature of our climate.

There is a little bit of a pivot here. Well, I should say certainly concern about climate in Iceland kind of goes hand-in-hand with a desire for energy independence, and that, as I mentioned earlier in response to a question from Senator Johnson, that the Icelanders have done a great deal of work in developing geothermal resources and are, indeed, in collaboration with commercial enterprises in the United States exporting that technology and know-how.

In fact, there is a joint Iceland-American company that has just won a billion-dollar contract to build a geothermal facility in Ethiopia. So, so there is awareness certainly of climate change as an issue, but also a desire to help not just within its own country and, indeed, in ours, but around the world to help to combat some of those effects by developing renewable resources where they are able to be developed.

Senator KAINE. And innovative strategies. Thank you, Mr. Barber.

Mr. Tsunis, a thank you and then a question. So a thank you to convey.

Norway has really been one of the great partners in the world on humanitarian relief in Syria, both in terms of dollars put into humanitarian effort, but also Norwegian personnel have played a major role in the destruction of the chemical weapons stockpile in Syria. And so, first, that is an important thing to acknowledge to the country when you are there that we recognize it. We appreciate them. We need more partners like Norway in this humanitarian issue.

Increasingly, finding ways to make sure that humanitarian aid gets delivered in Syria is occupying more and more of our time, and Norway has been a good asset. So I hope you will convey that.

And then the question that I wanted to ask you is, Norway has also been a really good ally for us in NATO and U.N. missions. So it is one thing to be a NATO member, but in terms of putting people into the field for both NATO missions with the United States or U.N. missions, whether they be in Libya or Mali or elsewhere, Norway has been a strong ally.

Is your understanding that the Norwegian public remains supportive of involvement with international institutions like NATO and U.N. in these kinds of missions? Is there still popular will to continue that?

Mr. TSUNIS. Thank you for your question, Senator.

As you know, they are a founding member of NATO. They are very, very engaged. NATO remains very popular in Norway, and it is considered the cornerstone of their defense strategy.

In November, Foreign Minister Brende and just last week the Defense Minister reiterated that at its core foreign policy and defense strategy is its relationship with the United States and with NATO. They have been a very effective ally. Some of the most effective—some of the most effective air resources in the Libyan conflict had been the Norwegian F-16s.

They are continuing their commitment to defense and NATO. They are in the process of purchasing 52 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, which really shows their commitment to interoperability. They have—also on the humanitarian effort not only are they a very active participant in the Lifeline Fund, which gives emergency funds to organizations that are under stress in civil societies, they chair the ad hoc liaison committee, which distributes humanitarian effort to the Palestinian state.

And in Syria, Foreign Minister Brende just announced in Kuwait an additional \$75 million in humanitarian aid for the people of Syria. That comes on top of \$85 million for civil society and two \$43 million commitments for humanitarian efforts that they previously have done.

They have written off \$500 million in loans in Burma, and throughout the world, they have shown themselves to be a very active facilitator of conflict but have also been very generous in humanitarian efforts, for development funds as well so these societies they are helping can stand on their own.

Senator Kaine. Mr. Chair, with permission, could I ask one question of Ms. Bell?

Ms. Bell, it strikes me that as I was hearing you chat about some of the civil institutional challenge in Hungary, particularly with the press, that you bring a really interesting expertise to this, having a background in media and press. You know, what better person to be able to speak to the values of an open society from a press standpoint and the reason to have a strong press climate than somebody who kind of comes out of that world.

And so, I am just really going to offer you an opportunity to just kind of comment upon that. I think some of the best work we do are our Ambassadors individually, but also our Nation as a nation is the example that we set. When we set the right example, it speaks louder than any words we could say.

You have been part of an industry in the communications side. You know what a free press, free and vigorous, robust, contentious, you know, press environment is like here. I would think that that would be something that in a diplomatic way you could, you know, bring to the table in encouraging Hungary to move more in that direction.

Ms. BELL. Thank you very much, Senator.

Yes, I do believe that freedom of the press is a core democratic value, and it is one that we all have to work, you know, to fight for the freedom of the press. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging the full range of civil society on this issue.

I know that in Hungary right now there are watchdog groups and citizens who are working hard to bring back these freedoms and promote that very important core value of media and free press in Hungary.

Senator KAINE. And finally, the State Department also has great assets and a special envoy that deals with anti-Semitism, wherever it is to be found throughout the world. And so, that is an asset also that you could draw on. Sadly, we see in too many countries in Europe, but elsewhere as well, anti-Semitism just still kind of a toxic brew that keeps stirring, and possibly it gets more challenging when there are difficult economic times. It seems to kind of spike.

But we see that throughout European countries as well as a little bit in the anti-immigrant strain that was mentioned with respect to some others. So I would just encourage you to use those assets at State and your own personal assets in the industry to help in making the case for progress.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Senator Markey.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much.

Mr. Barber, you are from Massachusetts, and I know you well, and I know you are going to do a great job as Ambassador. And I know that you do a lot of work with start-ups, and clearly, this is an opportunity to use your expertise in terms of the business relationship between the United States and Iceland.

And you just mentioned this partnership that we have for a billion-dollar deal, and so maybe you could talk a little bit about this incredible energy resource, which Iceland has. They are 100 percent hydro or geothermal in terms of the production of their electricity. So it is a 100-percent renewable country.

What can that mean for us in terms of partnerships from a business perspective?

Mr. BARBER. Thank you very much, Senator Markey, for your kind words. I hope that if I am confirmed, I will prove to be worthy of them.

I think that the—thus far what I have learned about the collaboration between our two countries, both on the commercial side as well as the research, educational components, there is a great deal of collaboration happening, and I would hope, if confirmed, to be witness to—indeed, aid as I am able—further collaboration.

It is, indeed, a very exciting opportunity. There is a good deal more that can be done. The efforts that are underway right now are very exciting ones. The university exchanges are among them.

And I think that one of the great opportunities that if I am confirmed I would like to be a part of is to engage U.S. manufacturing companies in the effort to apply this technology to be the providers of some of the hard resources that get utilized in the exploiting of the renewable resources not just in our country, certainly in Iceland, but in other parts of the world.

Senator MARKEY. Beautiful. Thank you.

You know what I would like to do? I would like to give each one of you 1 minute to tell us what it is that you want to achieve. Just a 1-minute summary. What is your goal when you all left? What is it that you hope to have achieved as the Ambassador to the country that you are going to be our Ambassador?

So we will begin with you, Ms. Bell, and then we will go right down, and we will finish up with Mr. Barber. So you have 1 minute. Just tell the committee what your goal is.

Ms. BELL. Thank you very much.

Hungary and the United States share many common values and positions on foreign policy. As I mentioned earlier, they are a strong and valued member of NATO. If confirmed, I look forward to furthering our security cooperation. Hungary contributes regularly to allied operations and peacekeeping missions.

I would also like to work to promote commercial opportunities for U.S. businesses and advocate for TTIP and ultimately use TTIP as a tool to increase our trade relationship, which will ultimately grow jobs for the United States and simultaneously improve the Hungarian economy.

I also think it is an important time to continue the dialogue on energy security and the need for energy diversification to provide the energy security.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you. One minute, that is great.

Mr. Tsunis.

Mr. TSUNIS. Thank you, Senator, for your question.

We do not have the challenges in our bilateral relationship with Norway that we do with some of the other countries, but there are opportunities where we can do things that are better. We have opportunities to grow trade, provide greater investment opportunities for Norwegian companies in the United States, which are beneficial to our companies and workers. Statoil has a \$27 billion investment with the United States.

We want to open up markets and continue to open up markets in Norway for our American companies, which will also benefit

companies and workers. We want to continue our close intelligence, military relationships with Norway because we will counter threats together. We need to do this together, which is very, very important.

And on the last point is just balancing energy security with environmental concerns. Norway does it very, very well. We need to continue to engage them to do that together.

Senator MARKEY. And finally, Mr. Barber.

Mr. BARBER. Thank you, Senator.

I have got three—broadly stated, three priorities. One is the protection of the interests of United States citizens in Iceland, to build upon the very strong, already strong bilateral relationship to promote security of the United States and of Iceland.

The second is along the lines of what has been discussed earlier, to promote those—seek out and promote those opportunities for bilateral trade and investment. One of the functions, I think, of an Ambassador is he or she gets to be a convener, a facilitator, a matcher of resources with opportunities.

That is a very exciting prospect for me. It is part of what I have been doing in my life heretofore, and I look forward to that as an opportunity, if confirmed as Ambassador to Iceland.

The third is, is to using the tools that are available, the tools of public diplomacy, to engage audiences across Iceland and to encourage the already-strong educational—Fulbright, for example—educational and cultural exchanges because I think this is good, in and of itself. But it broadens and deepens the bilateral relationship.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Barber.

And thank each of you for your willingness to serve our country. I am sure each of you is going to do an excellent job. Thank you so much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Markey.

What I love about this panel here today is that it represents the best of what we hope our Ambassadors will be, and that is representing the true diversity of the American experience. We have people with diverse background in law, in hospitality, in media, who have done philanthropic work in about 10 times as many different fields.

We really appreciate you being willing to serve and appearing before us today. We look forward to your quick confirmation in this committee and then on the floor so you can get to work.

We are going to leave the record open on this hearing until Tuesday at 6 p.m. If there are any additional questions, we hope that you will turn them around as quickly as possible to this committee.

Senator MURPHY. And with that, we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:50 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]