

NOMINATIONS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2020 (pm)

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 11:15 a.m., via video-conference, Hon. Cory Gardner, presiding.

Present: Senators Gardner, Young, Cardin, Shaheen, Kaine, and Merkley.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CORY GARDNER, U.S. SENATOR FROM COLORADO

Senator GARDNER. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order. Welcome all to today's full virtual committee. It is a full committee hearing, fully virtual as well, on nominations.

Today we have five distinguished nominees, including Mr. Erik Paul Bethel of Florida to be Ambassador to the Republic of Panama; and Mr. Jonathan Pratt of California to be Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti; Ms. Barbera Hale Thornhill of California to be Ambassador to the Republic of Singapore; Mr. Thomas Laszlo Vajda of Arizona to be Ambassador to the Union of Burma; and the Honorable Kenneth Weinstein of the District of Columbia to be Ambassador to Japan.

Congratulations to all of you and your families on your nominations and your willingness to serve. Thank you for being here today.

We have a couple people who wish to make some introductions. I will first turn it over to a distinguished member of the United States Senate, our former colleague, but nonetheless distinguished. It is a continued honor to have Senator Lieberman with us. Mr. Weinstein has a guest obviously, that being Senator Joe Lieberman from Connecticut who served in this body from 1989 to 2013. Senator Lieberman, the floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH L. LIEBERMAN, FORMER U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks very much. I am really excited to see my friends on the dais.

I am honored to——

Senator GARDNER. If I could just interrupt real quick, if you are not speaking, if you could hit the mute button, that would be great. Please continue, Senator Lieberman.

Senator LIEBERMAN [continuing]. Okay, thanks.

So I am honored to introduce Ken Weinstein to this committee as the President's nominee to be Ambassador to Japan.

As you know, it has been more than a year since the U.S. has had an ambassador in Japan. This is a critical bipartisan relationship for a long time, bipartisan and bilateral for a long time. And this year is a particularly important year with everything going on with COVID-19, with the increasing tensions between the U.S. and China, and of course, our continuing concerns about North Korea. So having an ambassador from the U.S. in Tokyo to strengthen this critical bipartisan relationship could not be more urgent, and frankly, I cannot think of a better nominee than Ken Weinstein.

He is extremely prepared to take on this responsibility by his own background in U.S.-China studies and relations. He is head of the Hudson Institute and through that has developed not only a great knowledge of the U.S.-Japanese relationship but very deep friendships and trusting relationships within Japan both in the Government and in the business community. And his nomination has been broadly applauded within Japan. And I know they are actually anxious for him to arrive.

It has also engendered an impressive and in these days unique response here in the United States, really across the board. When Ken was first nominated by President Trump, among the people who supported him were Senators Tom Cotton and Sheldon Whitehouse, Kay Coles James, who is the President of the Heritage Foundation, and David Harris, President of the American Jewish Committee. In the last week or 2, about 50 what I have come to know as formers, former people in public service in Washington, sent a letter to your committee, Chairman Gardner, endorsing Ken and urging his confirmation soon. And it was really a remarkable group that included again very broad, very experienced, very involved in U.S.-Japanese relationships, including two former Vice Presidents, Mondale and Quayle, I cannot resist saying one almost former Vice President Lieberman.

[Laughter.]

Senator LIEBERMAN. And National Security Advisors Hadley and McMaster, Directors of National Intelligence Blair and Coates, Ambassador Nikki Haley, and a lot of others as well. And they all agree—and this summarizes it—that Ken's foreign policy expertise, experience, and his personal temperament will make him a superb Ambassador to Japan.

I want to say in conclusion very briefly that I am really thrilled with this nomination and really thrilled to have the chance to speak briefly to your committee because I not only know Ken through the Hudson Institute, which I have had relations with for a long time, and the years since I left the Senate, for the last 5 or 6 years, I have actually co-chaired a group out of the Hudson Institute, which is a bipartisan commission on biodefense with Tom Ridge, the former and first Secretary of Homeland Security.

But beyond that, I know Ken personally. He is a friend. During my years in Washington, we went to the same synagogue together, the Georgetown synagogue. His family and mine have become friendly. He has a wonderful wife Amy, [inaudible] extraordinarily gifted warm interest in children. So this is a person of real honor and integrity who meets people well, who is a real American pa-

triot based on his own life story and also is devoted to strengthening U.S.-Japanese relations.

So again, I thank you for holding this hearing, for giving me the opportunity to introduce him, and needless to say, along with the others who wrote that letter a short while ago, I urge you to confirm him and send him to Tokyo as soon as possible.

Thank you very much.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Senator Lieberman, and thank you again for returning and joining us. I greatly appreciate your comments today and look forward to seeing you in person when we are able to do so again soon. Thank you, Senator Lieberman.

I want to make a few brief comments—then I will turn it over to Senator Merkley—about the nominees this morning.

Obviously, there are three nominees, Ms. Thornhill, Mr. Vajda, and Mr. Weinstein, who we visit with our work in Asia. This committee has worked successfully on the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act. The legislation passed with bipartisan support unanimously several years ago to create that first-time generational strategy as it relates to China and the Indo-Pacific built on three pillars, economy, security, and rule of law, democracy, and human rights. That legislation has set the framework for the work that we do in things like the Defense Authorization Act, the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. So I very much look forward to hearing how the nominees today will be able to implement, utilize the tools and the full array of opportunities that the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act has provided in their duties they will be carrying out in Burma, Japan, and Singapore and certainly Djibouti and Panama. We know the concerns that have been expressed universally with regard to China and how that Asia Reassurance Initiative Act can affect our work even beyond the free and open Indo-Pacific.

So I very much appreciate all of your willingness to serve. The families who are joining us on the Zoom, welcome and know that we appreciate you being here today.

Senator Merkley, I will turn it over to you if you would like to make a few comments.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF MERKLEY,
U.S. SENATOR FROM OREGON**

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the nominees for your willingness to serve.

I am pleased that even amidst the disruptions to normal Senate business, we are able to move forward and consider ambassadorial nominees to key countries. Each of the nominees would oversee critical bilateral relationships touching on key challenges such as economic development, human rights, climate chaos, military cooperation. All of them would have some role to play in navigating China's various challenges to U.S. leadership in the world.

Some of these nominees will represent the United States in countries that are regional leaders in Asia and are crucial to the implementation of our Indo-Pacific policy. Their work and influence would be instrumental in asserting U.S. leadership in Asia.

If confirmed, they would assume leadership roles during a global pandemic that has killed 700,000 people around the world, devastating the global economy, giving rise to tremendous global

health and humanitarian needs. It has exacerbated the risk of human rights abuse and violent conflict and harmed many of the world's most vulnerable people. And I look forward to hearing from each of you about your vision for strengthening the United States' ties with these countries and advancing U.S. policy leadership.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Senator Merkley. I appreciate it.

I know Senator Cardin was on the call as well, but if you do not mind, unless anybody else wishes to jump in here, I will go ahead and turn it over to the nominees today.

I would kindly ask that you limit your verbal remarks to no more than 5 minutes and your full written statements, of course, will be made a part of the record. This is a little bit of the honor system here because the time clock, the shot clock does not necessarily display properly or at all in this case. So please keep your comments to 5 minutes. We will get your full statement into the record.

And we will begin with Mr. Bethel and then we will turn, of course, to Mr. Pratt, followed by Ms. Thornhill, then Mr. Vajda, and then, of course, Ken Weinstein. So thank you very much. Mr. Bethel, you may begin.

STATEMENT OF ERIK PAUL BETHEL, OF FLORIDA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA

Mr. BETHEL. Thank you, Senator. Can you hear me?

Senator GARDNER. I can hear you great. Thanks.

Mr. BETHEL. Thank you.

Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Foreign Relations Committee, it is a great privilege to appear before you here today. And I am honored that the President nominated me to serve as Ambassador to Panama, and I am grateful for his support and for the support of Secretary Pompeo.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge my wife Michelle and my children, Ana Cristina, Nicolas, and Francisca, as well as my mother Diana who is an emigre to the United States from Cuba and also a local hire at the U.S. embassy in Havana in the 1950s. I would also like to acknowledge my late father, Paul Bethel, who spent a career in public service with State Department, and his legacy is critical to me being with you here today. I am especially grateful to have my wife Michelle in my life and for her continued support of my desire to serve our nation.

This is a tremendous privilege for me, and I cannot think of a greater honor than to serve our country in Panama.

My most recent experience was representing the U.S. at the World Bank, a position for which I was confirmed by the Senate in 2018. And previously for more than 2 decades, I worked at the intersection of finance and emerging markets. I have lived and worked in both Latin America and in Asia. I speak Spanish. I speak Mandarin. I speak Portuguese. If confirmed, I hope to utilize all of my experiences and skills to promote the mission of the State Department and to advance the interests of the United States.

Now, our relationship with Panama is one of great importance. For decades, Panama has been an enduring partner of the U.S., and Panamanians share our commitment to democracy, to human

rights, and to free markets. And if confirmed, I will work assiduously with the Panamanian Government and its people to deepen the relationship with the United States, given our shared history.

I am also aware, notwithstanding Panama's relative economic and political stability, that there are issues of concern. Transnational crime, inequality, and corruption pose an enduring challenge to the immense potential of Panama. If confirmed, I aspire to foster greater cooperation and work constructively with the Panamanian Government and its people to address these issues.

If confirmed, I would also seek to leverage the capabilities of all U.S. stakeholders so that our capacity can be used most productively to advance our nation's foreign policy interests. I will seek to work with Panama to further U.S. priorities such as safeguarding our significant expat population, promoting investment opportunities for U.S. businesses, and enhancing the integrity of our interconnected financial and banking systems.

And finally, if confirmed as Ambassador to Panama, I will work closely with the members of this committee and its staff and with other Members of Congress to perform my responsibilities as a faithful representative of the United States and the American people.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you and other members of the committee, and I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bethel follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ERIK BETHEL

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the Foreign Relations Committee, it is a great privilege to appear before you today. I am honored that President Trump nominated me to serve as Ambassador to Panama, and I am grateful for the support and confidence of the President and Secretary Pompeo.

Before I begin, I'd like to acknowledge my wife Michelle, my children Ana Cristina, Nicolas, and Francisca ("Panchita"), as well as my mother Diana, an emigre from Cuba and a local hire at the U.S. Embassy Havana in the late 1950s. I would also like to acknowledge my late father Paul Bethel who spent a career in public service with the U.S. Department of State. His legacy is critical to my being here with you today. I'm especially grateful to have my wife Michelle in my life, and for her continued support of my desire to serve our nation.

This is a tremendous privilege and I can think of no greater honor than to serve our country in Panama. I've long aspired to work in the public sector, especially in the capacity of diplomacy. I look forward to sharing my objectives as a nominee and to answering any questions involving my qualifications and experiences.

My most recent experience was representing the United States at the World Bank, a position for which I was confirmed by the Senate in 2018. Previously, for more than two decades, I worked at the intersection of finance and emerging markets. I have lived and worked in both Latin America and Asia, and speak Spanish, Portuguese and Mandarin. If confirmed, I hope to utilize my professional experiences and skills to promote the mission of the State Department and further U.S. interests.

Our relationship with Panama is one of great importance. Panama has been a strong and enduring partner of the United States. Panamanians share our commitment to democracy, human rights and free markets. If confirmed, I will work assiduously with the Panamanian Government and people to deepen the relationship with the United States, given our shared history and common destiny. I am also aware—notwithstanding Panama's relative economic and political stability—that there are issues of concern. Cycles of corruption, inequality, and transnational crime pose an enduring challenge to the immense potential of Panama. If confirmed I aspire to foster cooperation and work constructively with the Panamanian Government and its people address these issues.

If confirmed as Ambassador to Panama, I would also seek to leverage the capabilities of all U.S. stakeholders so that our capacity can be used most productively to advance our nation's foreign policy interests. Furthermore, I will seek to work with Panama to further U.S. priorities such as safeguarding our significant expatriate population, promoting greater foreign direct investment opportunities for American businesses, and enhancing the integrity of our interconnected financial and banking systems. Finally, if confirmed as Ambassador to Panama, I will work closely with the members of this committee and its staff, and with other Members of Congress, to perform my responsibilities as a faithful representative of the American people.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you and the other members of the committee, and I look forward to your questions.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Bethel. Thank you for your testimony.

Mr. PRATT. we will turn to you.

STATEMENT OF JONATHAN PRATT, OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF DJIBOUTI

Mr. PRATT. Thank you very much, Senator.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to come before you as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti. I am grateful to the President and the Secretary of State for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I will work with this committee and the Congress to advance our country's interests in Djibouti.

Mr. Chairman, my experience in Africa began as a Peace Corps volunteer in Guinea-Bissau 25 years ago. In the course of my Foreign Service career, I have participated in American efforts to resolve conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Sudan. I know that leading an embassy is a tremendous responsibility. If confirmed, I carry with me my experience as Deputy Chief of Mission at our embassy in Pakistan where I helped lead one of our largest overseas interagency teams, including colleagues from the armed services.

Throughout my career, helping develop the strength and effectiveness of the State Department and the Foreign Service has been a priority of mine. Please know that, if confirmed, I am committed to supporting the development of my institution and my colleagues, including the growth of a more diverse corps of professionals and leaders that truly reflects the strength and diversity of our great nation.

Over the last 5 years, Djibouti's economy has grown more than 5 percent per year, and the country is making sizable investments in its shipping, energy, and information technology sectors. If confirmed, I will work to build on the success of the current Ambassador to expand access for American companies and to ensure they are able to compete on a level playing field.

Since 2002, Djibouti has hosted the only enduring U.S. military installation in Africa at Camp Lemonnier. Along with Chabelly Airfield, Camp Lemonnier is a crucial platform for our armed forces who are working to promote security through the region. They are now on the frontlines of our great power competition with China, which in 2017 opened its first foreign military base in Djibouti. En-

sureing the long-term viability of American military installations in Djibouti is a national security priority, and if confirmed, I commit to extending my full support to our esteemed military colleagues who are based there.

We have a broad-based security partnership with the Government of Djibouti. The United States has helped train and equip Djiboutian peacekeeping troops deployed with the African Union Mission to Somalia. The United States has also supported President Omar Guelleh's effort to facilitate reconciliation between Somalia and Somaliland. If confirmed, I will continue to support these joint initiatives, which are vital to the security of the Djiboutian and American people.

Mr. Chairman, it is a great honor to sit here before you today. My maternal grandparents were Italian immigrants, and my mother was the first in her family to attend university here, later becoming a public school teacher and psychologist. My paternal grandfather contributed to our success in World War II as an engineer building aircraft engines. My father served in the U.S. Navy while studying nuclear medicine at the Bethesda Naval Hospital. It has been an honor to walk in their footsteps and dedicate my own life to public service.

My wife, Bridget Lines, is also a Foreign Service officer.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I welcome any questions you may have. Thank you for considering my nomination. [The prepared statement of Mr. Pratt follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JONATHAN G. PRATT

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to come before you as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti. I am grateful to the President and the Secretary of State for their confidence in me. If confirmed, I will work with this committee and the Congress to advance our country's interests in Djibouti.

Mr. Chairman, my experience in Africa began as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guinea-Bissau over twenty-five years ago. In the course of my Foreign Service career, I have participated in American efforts to resolve conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Sudan. I know that leading an embassy is a tremendous responsibility. If confirmed, I carry with me my experience as Deputy Chief of Mission at our embassy in Pakistan, where I helped lead one of our largest overseas interagency teams, including colleagues from the armed services.

Throughout my career, helping develop the strength and effectiveness of the State Department and the Foreign Service has been a priority of mine. Please know that, if confirmed, I am committed to supporting the development of my institution and my colleagues, including the growth of a more diverse corps of professionals and leaders that truly reflects the strength and diversity of our great nation.

Mr. Chairman, the administration's Africa Strategy, signed by the President, focuses on three core objectives: 1) advancing trade and commercial ties with key African states to increase American and African prosperity; 2) protecting the United States from cross-border health and security threats; and 3) supporting key African states' progress toward stability, citizen-responsive governance, and self-reliance.

Over the last five years Djibouti's economy has grown more than five percent per year and the country is making sizable investments in its shipping, energy, and information technology sectors. If confirmed, I will work to build on the success of the current ambassador and country team to expand access for American companies in these sectors and to ensure that they are able to compete on a level playing field with other global companies. China has financed many of Djibouti's recent infrastructure projects and now holds more than 70 percent of Djibouti's external debt. Promoting and protecting American access and influence in Djibouti, in spite of growing Chinese influence, is paramount to our national security. If confirmed, I will make it a top priority to ensure that American companies that want to do busi-

ness in Djibouti are able to do so, with the knowledge that American products and services are still the gold standard.

Since 2002 Djibouti has hosted the only enduring U.S. military installation in Africa, at Camp Lemonnier. Along with Chabelly Airfield, Camp Lemonnier is a crucial platform for our armed forces, who are working to promote security throughout the region. They are now on the frontlines of our great power competition with China, which in 2017 opened its first foreign military base in Djibouti. Ensuring the long-term viability of American military installations in Djibouti is a national security priority, and if confirmed, I commit to extending my full support to our esteemed military colleagues who are based there.

We have a broad-based security partnership with the Government of Djibouti. The United States has helped train and equip Djiboutian peacekeeping troops deployed with the African Union Mission to Somalia. The United States has also supported President Omar Guelleh's effort to facilitate reconciliation between Somalia and Somaliland. If confirmed, I will continue to support these joint initiatives, which are vital to security of the Djiboutian and American people.

In order to sustain Djibouti's economic and security gains, we must also support the development of Djibouti's democratic institutions. To that end, the United States has assisted Djibouti and its people to improve governance. Next year's presidential election provides an opportunity to encourage further progress.

Mr. Chairman, it is a great honor to sit before you here today. My maternal grandparents were Italian immigrants and my mother was the first in her family to attend university here, later becoming a public school teacher and psychologist. My paternal grandfather contributed to our success in World War II as an engineer building aircraft engines. My father served in the U.S. Navy while studying nuclear medicine at the Bethesda Naval Hospital. It has been an honor to walk in their footsteps and dedicate my own life to public service. My wife Bridget Lines, here with me today, is also a Foreign Service Officer.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I welcome any questions you may have. Thank you for considering my nomination.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Pratt. And thanks to all those you mentioned in your statement supporting you.

Ms. Thornhill, welcome to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. You may begin with your statement.

**STATEMENT OF BARBERA HALE THORNHILL, OF CALIFORNIA,
TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE**

Ms. THORNHILL. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee, it is my honor and privilege to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to be Ambassador to Singapore. I am grateful for the faith and confidence that President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo have shown in me.

If I may, I would like to introduce my family and friends that are important in my life. My son Hale; my new daughter Kelly; Oddie Nwobi, who is like a second son to me; my cousins, Fred and Fabian Thornhill; my long-time colleague, Rosie Segal, Janet Ramirez, and Evelyn Mangilet. Thank you.

I have come from a loving family in North Carolina, long known for its involvement in health care and charitable work. My mother, a pediatrician, was one of the first women to go to Duke Medical School, and my father, an ENT, invented the procedure known as the stapedectomy, an operation that led to the cochlear implant, a device that has helped hundreds of thousands of people hear again. But more than his skill as a surgeon, it was my father's commitment to treating underserved people and providing them with blessings that we so often take for granted that inspires me even now and motivates me every day.

My professional calling has not been medicine, however, but creating and succeeding in business. While at George Washington, I started an importing company selling grasscloth and silk wall covering from Korea and Japan to hotels and stores. The success of my first company led me to expand and create a design firm which managed many multi-complex projects from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to the Narita Hotel in Japan to the world clubs in Tokyo airport to Disney's five-star Mira Costa Hotel in Hong Kong.

The United States and Singapore respect the rule of law and have many shared values, including diversity, transparency, meritocracy, and innovation. Singapore has been very responsive and transparent with its efforts to counter the spread of the coronavirus, so it is no surprise that the U.S. and Singapore have collaborated and worked closely together on it.

For more than half a century, the United States and Singapore have forged an enduring relationship based on our essential principles.

One, Singapore is a vital economic partner for the U.S. The first bilateral free trade agreement that the U.S. signed with an Asian country was Singapore in January, 2004. In 2018, we had a trade surplus in goods and services which totaled more than \$18 billion. There are more than 4,500 companies in Singapore supporting over 200,000 jobs in the U.S.

Number two, Singapore is one of America's strongest defense partners in the region. This bilateral defense partnership bedrock is built on a 1990 memorandum of understanding and other agreements that allow U.S. military access to Singapore bases, airfields, and ports. Singapore recently purchased four F-35B fighters. Singapore has the largest permanent foreign military training presence in the United States with over 1,000 Singaporean Air Force people here at one time.

Our President made it crystal clear that Singapore is a priority for our country by signing the renewal of the 1990 MOU with Prime Minister Lee in 2019.

Number three, our country has a robust law enforcement and homeland security partnership that works together on economy, smart cities, responsible and secure 5G implementation to strengthen our security cooperation.

And finally, our people-to-people ties with a focus on human rights that is near and dear to my heart. Let me share why. I had the honor to work with Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity in Calcutta in 1994, lending an American heart and hands to the important work with children in orphanages and to the destitute and dying in the hospice known as the Home of the Pure Heart.

I participated in Operation Smile missions in Vietnam, Brazil, China, and elsewhere. These missions gave me an opportunity to see how one operation, one \$250 operation, changed a life, a family, and a village.

In the United States, I have worked with the Boy Scouts of America and provided leadership to over 20,000 under-privileged adolescents.

I also worked with the Children's Institute in Los Angeles to provide basic needs and psychological counseling to over 28,000 children who have been abused and suffered other horrible traumas.

My social work experience motivates my interest in addressing human rights. Even though Singapore has moved from tier 2 to tier 1, I will work closely with the Singaporeans in combating human trafficking, if confirmed as Ambassador.

If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed as Ambassador, I promise you that I will be a steward of all aspects of the relationship. I will be a vocal proponent for the United States, our views on inclusiveness, our support for democracy, and for one of our most important, cherished partners in the world, Singapore.

Chairman Gardner and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify before you today and giving my nomination your serious consideration.

I am pleased to answer your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Thornhill follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BARBERA HALE THORNHILL

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the committee. It is my honor and privilege to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to be Ambassador to Singapore. I am grateful for the faith and confidence that President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo have shown in me.

If I may, I would like to introduce my family and friends with me here today. My son Hale, my new daughter Kelly, Oddie Nwobi, who is like a second son to me, my cousins Fred and Fabian Thornhill, and my long-time friends and colleagues Evelyn Mangilet and Rosie Segal.

Let me share a little about my background. I come from a loving family in North Carolina long-known for its involvement in healthcare and charitable work. My mother, a pediatrician, was one of the first women to go to Duke Medical School and my father, an ENT, invented the procedure known as "Stapedectomy," an operation that led to the Cochlear implant—a device that has helped hundreds of thousands of people hear again. But more than his skill as a surgeon, it was my father's commitment to treating underserved people and providing them with blessings that we so often take for granted that inspires me even now, and motivates me every day.

My professional calling has not been medicine, however, but creating and succeeding in business. While at George Washington University, I started an importing company selling grasscloth and silk wallcovering from Korea and Japan to hotels and stores. The success of my first company led me to expand and create a design firm which managed many complex projects from the Narita Hotel in Japan, to world clubs at Tokyo airport, to Disney's 5-star Mira Costa Hotel in Hong Kong. These were multi-complex jobs around the world in Japan, China, England, and Saudi Arabia. I believe I learned much from these experiences about fostering inclusion and crossing cultural divides that will be useful if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed as Ambassador.

My professionalism and respect for other cultures allowed me to overcome challenges and differences in order to successfully complete ventures in accordance with the highest business and personal standards. I believe that my personal and business background would serve me well should I be confirmed as Ambassador to Singapore—a country with a remarkable record of entrepreneurship and business success and the potential for an even brighter future.

As you know, for more than half a century, the United States and Singapore have forged an enduring relationship based on four essential elements: (1) mutual economic interests, (2) defense cooperation, (3) a vigorous commitment to security, and (4) ongoing people-to-people ties. Both countries respect the rule of law and have many shared values—including diversity, transparency, meritocracy, and innovation. Together we have partnered to address global threats and challenges including terrorism, transnational crimes, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. So it is no surprise that the United States and Singapore have collaborated in our efforts to counter and stop the spread of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Singapore has experienced a significant number of confirmed COVID-19 infections per capita compared to many of its Southeast Asian neighbors. In the face of this challenge, Singapore has been very responsive and transparent with its efforts to counter the spread of corona virus since the outbreak began in late January. The Government has taken aggressive and proactive measures to reduce the spread of

this virus, including by implementing robust detection, testing, surveillance, and contact monitoring procedures. U.S. and Singaporean entities have come together to address this crisis. For instance, a U.S.-based pharmaceutical company is currently working with the a joint medical school founded by the National University of Singapore and Duke University to develop a vaccine. Our governments have also exchanged information on best practices and discussed ways to keep medical supply chains open, including for personal protective equipment. Through such coordination, the United States and Singapore have worked closely through the COVID-19 crisis.

Singapore is a vital economic partner for the United States. The first bilateral Free Trade Agreement the United States signed with an Asian country was with Singapore. From the day the bilateral Free Trade Agreement entered into force in January 2004, the United States has had a trade surplus in goods and services. In 2018 that surplus totaled more than \$18 billion. There are more than 4,500 American companies in Singapore and the United States has invested more than \$200 billion dollars in Singapore. We are Singapore's largest trading partner in services, and the two-way trade of goods and services between Singapore and the United States reached more than \$90 billion in 2018. More importantly, the robust trade relationship has supported over 200,000 jobs in the United States.

Singapore, this amazing city-state, is only 3.5 times the size of Washington, D.C., but one of America's strongest defense partners in the region. This bilateral defense partnership bedrock is built on the 1990 Memorandum of Understanding, the 2005 Strategic Framework Agreement, and the enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement of 2015 which allows U.S. military access to Singapore bases, airfields, and ports. We have an \$8.1B active Foreign Military Sales portfolio with Singapore. Singapore also decided to purchase four F-35B fighters. Singapore has the largest permanent foreign military training presence in the continental United States, with more than 1,000 Singapore Armed Forces personnel training at any one time. President Trump made it crystal clear that Singapore is a priority for our country by signing the renewal of the 1990 MOU with Prime Minister Lee in 2019, and Secretary of Defense Esper and the Singaporean Ministry of Defense signed an MOU in December last year, allowing Singaporean Air Force fighters to have a training facility in Guam.

The United States and Singapore have benefited from a robust law enforcement and homeland security partnership that strengthens the security of our citizens, our companies, and our nations by addressing challenges including cybercrime, cybersecurity, and financial technology. The United States works with our very capable partner Singapore on digital economy, smart cities, responsible and secure 5G implementations, and supporting the free but secure flows of data to strengthen our security cooperation, a third essential element.

Finally, the fourth essential element of our relationship, our people-to-people ties, such as educational exchanges and other public diplomacy programs, remain important. Focus on human rights is especially near and dear to my heart. Let me tell you a bit why that is so important to me.

I had the honor to work with Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity in Calcutta in 1994, lending an American heart and hands to their important work with children in orphanages, ailing homebound families, and to the destitute and dying in the hospice known as the "Home of the Pure Heart."

I participated in Operation Smile missions in Vietnam, Brazil, and China and elsewhere. These missions gave me an opportunity to see how one operation, one \$250 operation could change a life, a family, and a village.

In the United States I worked extensively with Scouts BSA formerly known as the Boy Scouts of America that has provided leadership and mentored youths to help them climb the ladder of personal achievement and prepare them for life struggles and challenges. This program has changed over 20,000 underprivileged adolescents.

I also worked with the Children's Institute in Los Angeles to help provide basic needs, early childhood education, psychological counseling, personal encouragement, and love for over 28,000 children who have been abused and have suffered many other horrible traumas.

My social work experience motivates my interest in addressing human rights and in particular human trafficking. Singapore has made significant strides in the fight against trafficking in recent years, including by expanding some protections within migrant labor recruitment systems and work conditions, and by identifying a higher number of victims. In November 2019, Singapore saw its first conviction of a labor trafficking case under the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act. Recognizing Singapore has moved from Tier 2 to Tier 1 in our annual anti-trafficking report, if confirmed, I will work closely with Singapore to encourage the Singaporeans to put even greater emphasis on this issue. I will work tirelessly on this effort.

The U.S.-Singapore bilateral relationship serves as one of our most important partnerships in the region ... a relationship we should embrace and treasure. Thanks to our shared values and long history of cooperation, we work closely with Singapore on shared regional security and economic objectives. Cooperation ranges from providing capacity-building programs to ASEAN countries to reinforcing international law in the maritime domain.

If I am fortunate enough to be confirmed as Ambassador, I promise you that I will be a steward of all aspects of the relationship, including with these four essential elements—trade, defense, security, and people-to-people programs. I will be a vocal proponent for the United States, our views on inclusiveness, and our support for democracy and for one of our most important, cherished partners in the world—Singapore.

Chairman Gardner, Ranking Member Menendez, and, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify before you today and giving my nomination your serious consideration.

I am pleased to answer your questions. Thank you.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Ms. Thornhill. Thank you very much for that statement.

Our next nominee, Mr. Thomas Laszlo Vajda, of Arizona, nominated to be the Ambassador to the Union of Burma. Mr. Vajda, please proceed.

STATEMENT OF THOMAS LASZLO VAJDA, OF ARIZONA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF MINISTER-COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNION OF BURMA

Mr. VAJDA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be the President's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to Burma and thank him for sending my name forward for consideration. I also thank Secretary Pompeo for his support.

I also want to express my deep gratitude to my wife, Amy Sebes, and our two daughters, Bette and Emily, for their support and their sacrifice. They have repeatedly changed jobs, changed schools, and been distant from family and friends so we could serve our country abroad. They have been outstanding representatives of the United States and have truly served their country.

I would also like to acknowledge my parents who came to the United States as penniless refugees from Hungary, escaping war and communism, and helped build a life for me here in this country.

Since 1991, I have had the privilege of serving as a U.S. diplomat, protecting the welfare of American citizens and advancing U.S. interests and values. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing the opportunity to pursue that work in Burma, a country whose people we have supported for decades in their efforts to overcome harsh military rule and achieve true democracy.

I served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Rangoon from 2008 to 2011 and worked to support the early stages of the opening in Burma that led to the country's first credible national elections in over 50 years in 2015.

Since that time, the civilian government has made important progress in a number of areas, consolidating some reforms, combating transnational crime, fighting corruption, and opening Burma's economy. However, the ongoing marginalization of ethnic

groups, violence in ethnic regions, and the involvement of the Burmese military in the economy and in politics have underscored that meaningful change in Burma remains an ongoing effort. This was never more clear than when the Burmese military committed horrendous atrocities, including ethnic cleansing, against the Rohingya community in August of 2017.

The United States has repeatedly expressed our deep concern about the horrific violence against Rohingya and other human rights abuses. We have matched this concern with action. With thanks to Congress, we are the leading donor of humanitarian assistance in response to the Rakhine State crisis, providing more than \$951 million to date.

We are also a leading voice in pushing for justice for victims and accountability for those responsible for atrocities, including by sanctioning top Burmese military officials. We must continue efforts to change the military's behavior and promote justice and accountability. We must also continue to push Burma to create conditions for the safe, dignified, voluntary, and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons.

It is also critical that we support Burma's efforts to resist malign foreign influences and challenges to its sovereignty by helping those in Burma who are pushing back on unfair investment practices and deals that provide little benefit to host communities.

I also want to highlight the importance of Burma's upcoming national election in November and acknowledge the significant funding that Congress has provided to support a free and fair vote.

In light of Burma's enormous challenges and our own interest in the country's democratic and free market development, U.S. engagement is essential to advancing reform and helping Burma protect its autonomy. If confirmed, I look forward to representing the United States and working with the people of Burma to achieve the peace and prosperity they deserve.

Thank you again for your consideration.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Vajda follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THOMAS VAJDA

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Menendez, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to be the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Burma and thank him for sending my name forward for consideration. I also thank Secretary Pompeo for his support.

I also want to express my deep gratitude to my wife, Amy Sebes, and our two daughters, Bette and Emily, for their support and their sacrifice. They have repeatedly changed jobs, changed schools, and been distant from family and friends so that we could serve the United States overseas. They have been outstanding representatives of the United States and have truly served their country.

Since 1991, I have had the privilege of representing the United States and the American people as a U.S. diplomat. I believe strongly in public service and have worked throughout my career to protect the welfare of American citizens and advance U.S. interests and values. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to continue this work in Burma—whose people we have supported for decades in their efforts to overcome harsh military rule and work toward true democracy.

I know members of this committee follow Burma closely and understand the enormous challenges the people of Burma continue to face. For five decades, military or military-backed governments employed wide-scale repression and violence that left Burma with a long history of human rights abuses, civil strife, weak institutions, and an underdeveloped economy.

I served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Rangoon from 2008 to 2011, and worked with Embassy colleagues to support the early stages of the opening that led to Burma's first credible national election in a half century in 2015. That led to improvements in a number of important areas. But as events have since shown, Burma continues to confront structural challenges to this day.

The current civilian government has made important progress in consolidating some reforms, countering transnational crime, fighting corruption, and opening Burma's economy. However, the pace of reforms has slowed and in some cases stagnated. The ongoing marginalization of ethnic and religious minority groups, violence and abuses in ethnic regions, and involvement of the Burmese military in politics and the economy have underscored that meaningful change in Burma remains an ongoing effort and an ongoing necessity.

This was never more clear than when the Burmese military committed horrific atrocities, including ethnic cleansing, against the Rohingya community in August 2017—three years ago this month. In a brutal response to attacks on its forces, the Burmese military massacred, assaulted, and raped thousands of Rohingya, driving more than 740,000 to flee across the border into Bangladesh and internally displacing thousands more.

The United States has repeatedly expressed our deep concern about the horrific violence against Rohingya and ongoing human rights abuses. We have matched this concern with action: with thanks to Congress, we are the leading donor of humanitarian assistance in Bangladesh and Burma in response to the Rakhine State crisis, providing more than \$951 million to date.

We are also a leading voice in pushing for justice for victims and accountability for those responsible for atrocities and abuses, including by sanctioning top Burmese military officials. We must continue efforts to change the military's behavior, prevent future atrocities, and promote justice and accountability. We also must continue to push for Burma to create conditions for the safe, dignified, voluntary, and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons.

It is also critical that we support Burma's efforts to resist malign foreign influences and challenges to its sovereignty. While the United States and like-minded partners are urging more democratic, political, and economic reforms, there are others who work towards returning Burma to its closed and repressive past. To support Burma in this regard, the United States will need to continue helping government officials, economic reformers, and civil society actors who are pushing back on unfair investment practices and deals that provide little benefit to local communities.

I also want to highlight the importance of Burma's upcoming election in November—only the second nationwide democratic election after five decades of military rule—and acknowledge the significant funding Congress has provided for programs to help ensure a free and fair vote and promote continued reforms.

In light of Burma's enormous challenges and our own interest in the country's democratic and free-market development, U.S. engagement is essential to advancing these reforms and helping Burma defend against malign influences. Change in Burma will take time. It will take leadership and new ideas and hard-won progress; and the United States will have a critical role to play in supporting that process. If confirmed, I look forward to representing the United States and working with the people of Burma to achieve the peace and prosperity they deserve.

Thank you again for your consideration. I look forward to your questions.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Vajda.

And next we will turn to the nominee to be Ambassador to Japan, Mr. Ken Weinstein. Thank you very much. You may proceed.

STATEMENT OF HON. KENNETH R. WEINSTEIN, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO JAPAN

Mr. WEINSTEIN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member. I am profoundly honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Japan.

I should note I am incredibly touched by the introduction by my friend, a great public servant, Senator Joe Lieberman. I am wondering why I am even bothering testifying after those remarks.

But in all seriousness, I would like to offer heartfelt gratitude to the President, to Vice President Pence, and to Secretary Pompeo, as well as to the officers at State and Mission Japan.

I would not be here today were it not for my inspiration and closest friend, my wife, Amy Kauffman. Our children, Raina, Harry, and Eden, are our pride and joy.

Hudson Institute, which I head, is an extraordinary organization privileged to work with so many members of this committee on both sides of the aisle. I am deeply grateful to my colleagues and our trustees, especially Sarah May Stern and Wally Stern.

Today, however, I think of those who have guided in life, most especially those who are no longer with us and in particular my parents who dedicated their lives to serving others. Dad, a physician in Brooklyn, made house calls until he was in his 70s. My mom, a refugee from Nazi Germany, taught in public schools in underserved communities. Mom knew totalitarianism firsthand and cherished the promise of America. She imbued this love in her students and in her five sons, and it is this dedication to service and love of a country that I will bring with me to Tokyo.

As a scholar and think tank leader, I built relations of trust with leaders in Japan and at home, and I am deeply grateful that so many distinguished former officials support my nomination.

The U.S.-Japan relationship is extraordinarily close, as we can see by the friendship and frequent communication between Prime Minister Abe and President Trump. The U.S.-Japan alliance is the cornerstone of peace, security, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. Japan hosts more American military than any other ally and key assets. Japan's national defense program guidelines are aligned with our National Security and our National Defense Strategy, and we share a vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific, a concept developed by Prime Minister Abe and then adapted by President Trump.

If confirmed, I will encourage Japan to shoulder even greater responsibility in the face of the significant security challenges we face together in Northeast Asia, and it is essential that we leverage our joint capabilities through our allies and partners in line with the landmark Asia Reassurance Initiative. And I commend the chairman and this committee for shepherding this legislation through.

Our two countries represent nearly 30 percent of global GDP, and if confirmed, I hope to work towards a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement while expanding economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. Together we pursue new frontiers in 5G, quantum, and AI, and Japan is our lead partner in the U.S.-led effort to send humans back to the moon.

The trust embedded in the alliance, an alliance of strong and proud democracies, is critical to envisioning and realizing a secure post-pandemic world. And humanity as a whole looks to the 2020 Plus 1 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in what should be a celebration of our collective triumph over COVID-19.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the committee for your consideration of my nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and your talented teams and our talented teams in Washington and at Mission Japan to advance our national interests through close collaboration with Japan. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Weinstein follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KENNETH R. WEINSTEIN

I am profoundly honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Japan.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the President, to Vice President Pence, and to Secretary Pompeo, as well as to the talented officers at the State Department and especially the remarkable personnel, American and Japanese, from State and other agencies in Mission Japan for their incredible dedication during these challenging times.

I would not be here today were it not for my inspiration and closest friend, my wife of nearly twenty-four years, Amy Kauffman. Our three independent-minded children, Raina, 22, Harry, 21, and Eden, 18, are my pride and joy. If confirmed, all of us look forward to returning to Japan, a country we treasure, having visited multiple times as a family.

I am very grateful to friends and colleagues at Hudson Institute, the think tank that has been my professional home for nearly twenty-five of the twenty-nine years that I have been in the workforce. I have learned so much from our interactions and am proud of what we have built together.

Although Hudson founder Herman Kahn (1922-1983) passed away long before I joined the Institute, he stoked my interest in contemporary Japan through his path-breaking work on Japan's economy.

I am deeply grateful to our Board of Trustees, to our Chair, Sarah May Stern, and most especially as the inaugural Walter P. Stern Chair holder, to our Chair Emeritus, Wally Stern, for their friendship and support.

And I cannot thank COO John Walters sufficiently for taking on additional responsibilities as a result of this nomination.

Numerous teachers, mentors, friends and relatives are watching online today. I especially think of others who are not with us any longer but who have guided me throughout life—none more selflessly than my parents who dedicated their lives to serving others, and who serve as an example to my brothers and me.

My dad, Victor Weinstein, a physician in a working-class neighborhood in Brooklyn, made house calls until he was in his seventies; my mother, Hannelore Weinstein, taught for almost five decades in public schools in underserved communities in New York City.

When Mom arrived in New York in 1940 as a refugee from Nazi Germany, she and her family—including her brother, my beloved uncle Seligman Rosenberg, who passed away in late June—had high expectations for the United States.

Mom loved the promise of America with all her heart and imbued that love in her five sons and her students. And it is this love of country that I will bring with me to Tokyo.

The list of luminaries who have served as U.S. Ambassador to Japan is humbling, from the legendary Townsend Harris, our first Consul General in Shogun-era Japan, to Edwin Reischauer, Mike Mansfield, Howard Baker, Tom Foley, Walter Mondale and beyond.

I am not their equivalent in stature or credentials. Nonetheless, over the past two decades, as a scholar and think tank leader, I have watched the evolution of Japan's strategic culture in the face of growing challenges and played a small role in the transformation of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

I have built relationships of trust with key government and opposition figures, business leaders, intellectuals and journalists in Japan, as well as their counterparts in the U.S., that leave me well poised to assume the position of Ambassador to Japan, if confirmed by the Senate.

Our relationship with Japan is extraordinary in its depth and breadth, as demonstrated by the friendship and unprecedented level of communication between President Trump and Prime Minister Abe.

The United States' relationship with Japan has never been stronger, broader, and more important to both countries than it is now. As never before, we work side by side to preserve peace, pursue prosperity, and push forward to new frontiers. The United States and Japan stand together for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, we promote sustainable economic development from Southeast Asia to the Pacific Islands, Africa, and Latin America, join hands in the fight against COVID-19, and in the journey back to the moon and beyond to Mars.

This deep and enduring partnership rests upon the bonds forged between our two peoples, arising ultimately from our shared commitment to freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. And with your support and counsel, there is

much more we can and must do in the face of immense challenges and extraordinary opportunities.

For six decades, the U.S.-Japan Alliance has served as the cornerstone of peace, security, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. Japan hosts over 50,000 U.S. military personnel and advanced U.S. defense assets, including the U.S. 7th Fleet, enabling both countries to ensure peace and stability in the region and beyond.

I could highlight countless examples of our ever-increasing security cooperation. Most noteworthy is the close coordination of the strategic policy documents of both countries, the United States' National Security Strategy (2017) and the National Defense Strategy (2018), with Japan's National Defense Program Guidelines (2019).

The close coordination of these strategies, and our broad alignment on promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific—a concept first announced by Prime Minister Abe in August 2016 and then adapted by President Trump in November 2017—are indications that the U.S.-Japan security partnership is ever closer.

Japan is advancing our security cooperation in numerous ways, including expanding port calls and extensive participation in military exercises, completing Reciprocal Access Agreements and Acquisitions and Cross-Servicing Agreements with other U.S. allies, as well as renewing its commitment to coordinate information security across the whole-of-government.

Japan, moreover, has increased its defense spending each of the past eight years. It has strengthened and modernized its defense capabilities, with a focus on state-of-art equipment, interoperability, cross domain capabilities, maritime domain awareness, and the emerging technologies of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

If confirmed, however, I will encourage Japan to strengthen its capabilities even further and shoulder greater responsibility within the Alliance. I would also work with Japan in its continued efforts to ensure the steady implementation of the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, especially with respect to the Futenma Replacement Facility. Strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific requires all of us to do more.

I will also make every effort so that we and our Japanese allies successfully build a strong network of allies and partners to enhance our collective security in the Indo-Pacific consistent with the objectives of the important Asia Reassurance Initiative Act, and I applaud the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for shepherding through this important legislation.

This increasing convergence, and Japan's increasingly robust foreign and defense policies, have not occurred in a strategic vacuum. We face immense security challenges in Northeast Asia. The U.S. and Japan have worked in close partnership to meet the threat posed by North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile and related programs, including through increased cooperation on missile defense.

Japan is arguably our strongest ally in the pressure campaign against the DPRK through the full implementation of United Nations sanctions. The issue of the DPRK's abduction of Japanese citizens and their suffering in North Korea, moreover, is dear to the heart of the Japanese people; President Trump has personally raised this issue at both the Singapore and Hanoi summits.

As Beijing's military capabilities and technological prowess increases, the destabilizing actions of the People's Republic of China both in the Indo-Pacific region and globally are likely to grow as well. Beijing's unlawful maritime claims, disruptive behavior toward neighboring countries, and efforts to strong-arm neighbors—many of which are U.S. allies or close partners—and challenges to the liberal, rules-based order need to be called out and countered. In recent months, vessels from the People's Republic of China have harassed Japanese fishing vessels and engaged in other kinds of problematic behavior in waters around the Senkakus.

In the sustained effort to promote a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, Japan and the U.S. must intensify our multilateral and networked cooperation with other U.S. and Japanese allies and partners in the region. We also need to continue to work closely to assist our friends in Southeast Asia on a wide range of security and economic interests.

In addition to preserving the peace, the U.S. and Japan are close partners in pursuing prosperity, between our nations and beyond. The U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement entered into force on January 1, 2020 and provides an important new market access that benefits the United States and Japan. A separate U.S.-Japan Digital Trade Agreement entered into force the same day that parallels the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) as the most comprehensive and high-standard trade agreement addressing digital trade barriers ever negotiated. Trade is an area in which our two economies thrive in the global marketplace and where we can make more progress bilaterally, and work together regionally and multilaterally.

Pursuing Phase Two negotiations with Japan toward a comprehensive trade agreement provides the United States the opportunity to further deepen our critical

economic relationship. Together, our two countries comprise approximately 30 percent of global gross domestic product, and we are among each other's top trading partners, exchanging over \$300 billion of goods and services each year. The United States is Japan's top source of direct investment, and Japan is the largest investor in the United States, with \$644.7 billion invested across all 50 U.S. states.

The U.S.-Japan bilateral economic relationship is rapidly evolving into the paragon of broad economic cooperation to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific.

These days, pursuing prosperity means promoting connectivity, energy security, transportation and investment in infrastructure. Under President Trump's and Prime Minister Abe's leadership, we have been expanding our economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world, including through numerous whole-of-government efforts coordinated with Japan.

The Japan-U.S. Strategic Energy Partnership and the Japan-U.S. Strategic Digital Economy Partnership are expanding cooperation with the private sector and third countries to support high quality infrastructure, energy, and digital connectivity projects. The Japan-U.S. Mekong Power Partnership helps support the Mekong region's pursuit of energy security, while encouraging bilateral and regional trade and integration in this sector.

If confirmed, I will strive for continued and expanded engagement with our private sectors which are at the forefront of efforts to preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific in the face of unfair competition from malign actors.

As part of these efforts, Japan and the U.S. have joined closely with Australia to identify and advance and certify quality infrastructure projects in the Indo-Pacific through the Infrastructure Transaction and Assistance Network and the Blue Dot Network, offering a transparent alternative to the opaque lending terms and unsustainable debt burdens inherent to the Belt and Road Initiative, with the goal of signaling to developing countries that a healthier alternative to the PRC is available.

Our economic cooperation has led to close collaboration in science and technology, which is increasingly at the center of the U.S.-Japan relationship. The U.S. and Japan are working together to promote an open, interoperable, reliable and secure digital economy that will allow individuals around the globe to benefit from the promise of 5G technology, which will be critical to transportation, health care and education and the extraordinary progress of the Internet of Things moving forward.

The U.S.-Japan relationship, moreover, is pushing humanity forward to new frontiers. Japan, which has increasing space capabilities, has become the lead international partner in our collective effort to send humans back to the moon, and is eager to take part in efforts at human exploration of Mars.

Scientists at our national laboratories and universities, as well as engineers and corporate research teams, are driving advances in materials science, next-generation computing, commercial space exploration, and more. If confirmed, I will endeavor to leverage science and technology agreements, such as the landmark December 2019 U.S.-Japan quantum sciences cooperation agreement, to expand our shared scientific horizons.

Protecting our scientific and technological innovation and protecting our intellectual property is critical to our continued economic prosperity and national security. U.S. and Japanese firms are developing exciting new technologies, which often have sensitive security and military applications.

The theft of cutting-edge research and intellectual property—highlighted by FBI Director Christopher Wray in a recent speech on the threat posed by the People's Republic of China to economic and national security—has far reaching implications. As Ambassador, protecting emerging technologies and critical supply chains will be one of my top priorities. This will include strengthening our cyber defenses and coordinating information security practices to preserve our shared economic and defense advantages as well.

The close collaboration on our response to COVID-19, would not have been possible without the firm trust and genuine friendship between the United States and Japan. Researchers from Japan and the United States, from both academic and private sectors, are finding innovative ways to collaborate on COVID medical countermeasures. This includes the use of Japan's Fugaku supercomputer to analyze existing medications to prioritize clinical trials for potential treatments, as part of the U.S.-led COVID-19 High Performance Computing Consortium, an international effort to use supercomputing to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Both countries are also committed to strengthening future pandemic preparedness in the region through ASEAN initiatives. For instance, Japan is supporting the establishment of a new ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases. The United States, through USAID, is supporting the creation of a Public Health Emergency Coordination System for ASEAN. Through these initiatives, the United States

and Japan are both committed to strengthening health capacity to address future health security threats in the ASEAN nations.

Japanese companies operating in the United States have contributed to our medical response by donating N95 respirators and redirecting their U.S. manufacturing capabilities to produce face shields and hand sanitizers. We are also sharing information and working together with partner countries to provide solutions and support throughout the Indo-Pacific region. If confirmed, I hope to build on our ongoing collaboration and experiences to better prepare for potential public health crises and natural disasters.

In addition, both Japan and the U.S. are taking critical measures to build supply chain resiliency through trusted vendors in the aftermath of the initial outbreak of COVID-19. I look forward to taking part in these conversations, if confirmed by the Senate, as the trust embedded in the U.S.-Japan relationship will be critical to the post-pandemic world.

Despite the disruption from COVID-19, the U.S.-Japan relationship continues to stand on a solid foundation of people-to-people relations. Japanese and Americans visiting, studying and investing in each other's countries are a tremendous cultural, economic, and strategic investment in the future health of the alliance. I am confident once the current situation settles, the robust exchange will continue stronger than ever and, if confirmed, I will work to ensure that the U.S. citizens traveling or residing in Japan can safely and smoothly return to normality.

The next Olympic and Paralympic games in Tokyo will symbolize and celebrate our collective triumph over COVID-19 and, if confirmed, I plan to reinforce our embassy's efforts such as the "Go for Gold" campaign, to engage with young people across Japan. This initiative brings Olympians, Paralympians, and other athletes to local communities that will host Team USA, sends American diplomats into Japanese classrooms around the country, and empowers teachers in Japan through special training programs.

I am truly honored to be nominated to serve as Ambassador to one of our most dependable and dynamic allies around the world. I especially look forward to benefiting from the support of the talented Foreign Service professionals, both American and locally employed staff, at our Mission in Japan.

I would like to thank this committee for your consideration of my nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you to advance our national interests and address our greatest global challenges through close collaboration with Japan.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Weinstein. And in the interest of making sure that we get as many people asking questions as possible, I will reserve my time and turn to Senator Merkley, if you would like to begin with your questions.

Senator MERKLEY. Okay. Well, very good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will jump right in.

First, Mr. Bethel, I would like to have you give some sense of how we can combat the money laundering challenge that has been repeatedly identified in association with Panama.

Mr. BETHEL. Thank you, Senator.

The issue obviously involves status. Panama is back on the gray list. They were on the gray list earlier. But due to recent events, they were taken off.

There are a number of things that we can do to help Panama get off of the gray list, and I think this is one of President Cortizo's campaign promises or platforms. And to the extent that we can and if I am confirmed, I look forward to working with Panama and with different aspects of the U.S. Government, whether it is Treasury's Office of Technical Assistance or others, to help Panama get off the gray list.

And I think getting off the gray list will do a couple of things. It will bring in serious capital to Panama, whether it is from Fidelity or J.P. Morgan and so forth, and it will also create jobs in Panama and create an enabling environment that will allow the country to move beyond where it is today and to [inaudible].

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you. I just want to emphasize that with your background in finance, international banking, you can bring a lot of policy expertise to bear on something that is very related to terrorist financing, drug financing, and therefore affecting the quality of life [inaudible] many ways.

Mr. BETHEL. Yes, sir. Thank you.

Senator MERKLEY. I wanted to turn to Mr. Pratt. And our relationship with Djibouti is heavily focused on security assistance. If you could increase and strengthen the partnership in other dimensions, what dimension would you really emphasize?

Mr. PRATT. Thank you, Senator.

As you said, we do have a very strong security relationship, and I hope to build on that. But I also hope to help develop our economic relationship with the country. Our current Ambassador there has done a very good job of helping U.S. companies get into the market, especially in energy and food processing sectors. So I will continue to do everything possible to build up our economic relationship with that country, recognizing that the United States offers a different model of economic engagement than China does. We are often the gold standard for business development.

Senator MERKLEY. So [inaudible] many places it is engaged in what some have referred to as debt trap financing. They have a lot of projects going in Djibouti. Do you have a sense of how America weighs in on that relationship between China and Djibouti?

Mr. PRATT. Thank you, Mr. Senator.

We are concerned about the over \$1 billion in debt Djibouti currently has to China. China was able to offer a lot of assistance in building out infrastructure. That has been very important to Djibouti, including the railway, the road, and the water pipeline from Ethiopia. But that very large debt service is something that is of concern. And I plan to explore and I know that the State Department is already exploring the Debt Sustainability Initiative to help Djibouti as it is helping other countries look at the debt burden that it is servicing and how to make that more sustainable over the long term.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Ms. Thornhill, you have an extensive business background, an extensive philanthropic background. What do you feel in your life history prepares you for the complex relationship we have with Singapore?

Ms. THORNHILL. Thank you for the question.

I have had the privilege of working from Saudi Arabia to Japan and working in other countries around the world, but working in several countries as a single woman owning a business was a challenge, and I had to use determination, diplomacy, and listening a great deal understanding because when I stepped into the organization in Japan, I immediately realized there was resentment for a female-owned business. There was a place for me. So I realized in order to achieve my project, that I would have to use even more determination and understanding so it would be finished on time, on budget. I am pleased to say that doing this work and listening across the different cultures, we were able to complete the project under budget and in time, and the contractor asked me to do his next project.

So I feel that this diplomacy, this listening, as they say two ears, one mouth, this understanding will help me in promoting new businesses also with Singapore because Singapore, as you know, started out as a malaria trading post, manifested itself into the international hub, then a hub for finance around the world and business, is one of the most respected places to do business. So hopefully I will be able to work with American businesses and American universities to bring new ideas to help out with their economy and their investment in Singapore.

Thank you.

Senator MERKLEY. [inaudible] there is one piece I wanted to ask you about, which is your background as a donor to Project Veritas. Can you explain that to us?

Ms. THORNHILL. Yes. I think about 8 years ago, a good friend of mine called me to come to her home and be supportive. She was having difficulty. And I went to this party—I mean, dinner party late, participating, donating money, and left, and that was my first and my last interaction with Veritas. I only knew about the founder walking across the border as bin Laden. That is all I have dealt with. I mean, all I have ever connected with.

Senator MERKLEY. So you had said, when you were asked about it before, being a woman, I was very concerned about anything that seems to expose but not be the truth about abuse against women. I did not understand what you were trying to say by that.

Ms. THORNHILL. I am sorry, sir.

Senator MERKLEY. We lost the connection with you for a moment there.

Ms. THORNHILL. I am sorry.

Senator MERKLEY. You were previously quoted when you were asked about this as saying, being a woman, I was very concerned about anything that seems to expose but not be the truth about abuse against women. I think it sounded like that as an explanation of why you supported them, and I did not really understand what you meant by that.

Senator GARDNER. Senator Merkley, your time has expired, but, Ms. Thornhill, if you can give a brief answer. Senator Merkley, you can come back in a second round if you would like to ask. But, Ms. Thornhill, go ahead with a brief answer. Then we can move on. Thank you.

Ms. THORNHILL. I was referring to the fact that in certain countries that I worked, initially women were looked upon as second class citizens and their position was not to have a female-owned business. So I realized then that I would have to work much harder and be more determined to achieve my goal. And I feel that that has put me in a position of knowing how to deal with diplomacy and how to make things happen but in a very diplomatic way, and that is what I meant.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Senator Merkley.

And just a reminder, there were 5 minutes in the question and answer, and we can come back around for a second round if people would like to do that.

Senator Young, I will turn to you.

Senator YOUNG. Can you see me? Can you hear me?

Senator GARDNER. Yes.

Senator YOUNG. My apologies.

Well, I will just dive right in. Mr. Dayton. Okay, I just stepped in here and I regret Mr. Dayton was in the morning session, and I will be submitting my answers to him.

So, Mr. Pratt, Djibouti was brought up earlier, and I am concerned about the increase in China's presence there. It has emerged as a base for the projection of Chinese influence in the horn of Africa and adjacent waters. As a career diplomat with service in multiple African capitals, what is your assessment of the strategic implications of rising Chinese influence in Djibouti and throughout Africa?

Mr. PRATT. Thank you, Senator.

I know that this is something that the State Department and the current Ambassador is looking very closely at. As I mentioned in my statement, China opened its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017.

Since then, we have been working very closely with the Government of Djibouti and with other international partners to make sure that all of the countries that have bases in Djibouti are playing by the same rules and respecting Djibouti's sovereignty. So I plan to continue to look very closely at any concerning behavior and any objectives that China may have in the region.

I am happy to report that the United States continues to have a really strong relationship with the Government of Djibouti. I believe that we are the security partner of choice in that country and in the region, and, obviously, we are helping to stabilize the horn of Africa and Somalia. So I hope to build on those relationships and support our armed services.

Senator YOUNG. What should we do, sir, to provide the African people with a counter-narrative that highlights the long-term risks of dealing with China and the long-term benefits of dealing with the United States and our partner nations who share more of our values?

Mr. PRATT. Well, sir, I think we offer a different model and frankly a better model, a more transparent model. China has offered things to Djibouti that we were not offering several years ago, very large infrastructure projects. But the United States offers many things economically in Djibouti right now that I believe we can continue to build on.

My colleagues in the U.S. Agency for International Development are training Djiboutians. We have a very large jobs sector program, which the Government of Djibouti and the people of Djibouti appreciate very much. We are working especially to improve services at their ports. Djibouti has a very high quality deepwater port that services the region, especially Ethiopia, and the people of Djibouti know that we are there helping to train their workforce, engaging with their people. On our military installations and at our embassy, we employ very large numbers of Djiboutian people. We have a very open and transparent relationship, and, as I mentioned in my statement, we have been working very hard to bring U.S. companies into Djibouti, including in the energy and food processing sector. So I think there is a lot we can build on there.

Senator YOUNG. Well, I thank you, sir, for your years of distinguished service. I regret that I have a conflict, Mr. Chairman, so I will yield back the balance of my time.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Senator Young. Senator Cardin?

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

And let me thank all of our nominees for their willingness to serve our country. We appreciate it. These are challenging times to be involved in global diplomacy, so thank you. And thanks to your families, because we know you cannot do this without a supportive family.

There is a common theme among all of the countries that are involved in today's hearing. One is the advancement of U.S. values as it relates to good governance, human rights, and related issues. Each of these countries have challenges in different degree.

The other common theme is the impact that China has on their relationship. China has been very aggressive in their investments in our own hemisphere, as well as their own region. And what impact is that having on U.S. security interests?

So for each for you, these are areas of concern.

I am going to start first, if I might, with Mr. Vajda in regards to Burma because, among all the countries, that country has its greatest challenge on human rights. And first of all, let me thank you for your career service, we appreciate that very much, and your dedication.

But with Burma, we have a unique challenge, in that the country was moving in the right direction towards civilian democracy with free and fair elections, electing a leader, only to find the military usurp power back in that country. Very disappointing. And of course, we had the horrendous issues in regards to the Rohingya population that still is a major global human rights challenge.

So just tell me briefly how you intend to advance those issues under the environment that we now see in Burma, how we can get them back on track to the type of reforms that would lead to a more democratic state.

Mr. VAJDA. Thank you for that question, Senator. And I agree with your assessment. Burma certainly suffers from significant challenges on governance and human rights. I think the reality is that it is still coming out of a period of 50 years of very harsh military rule where the military [inaudible] oppression and absolutely squelching all dissent.

There has been some progress. I think that is important to note, and you acknowledge that as well. Certainly there is greater free press. There is more activism among civil society. Political parties are able to form. There was a relatively free and fair election in 2015. We are headed for what we hope will be another one today.

I think the importance for us in the United States is to really build on our comparative strengths in that country. So we have been seen rightly as the longstanding supporter of the human rights and democracy activists in that country. We have, I think, tremendous influence in that regard. We have a very active assistance program, and for that, we thank Congress, which is largely geared towards empowering civil society, working with political

parties, building the institutions around governance and including with regard to the elections that are coming forward today.

And I think it is important that we remain actively engaged and present. I think those who are working towards a better and brighter future in Burma look to the United States as their strongest advocate and their strongest allies. And if I am confirmed as Ambassador, that would be a major priority for me, is to help move the country along on what has admittedly been a very difficult and challenging path towards democracy.

Senator CARDIN. You will have friends here in this committee that will do everything we can to help you advance that agenda.

If I can, let me turn to Mrs. Thornhill in regards to Singapore. One does not normally look at Singapore as a challenge on governance, but the 2019 Reporters Without Borders ranks Singapore 151st among 180 nations in its annual world press freedom index behind neighbors such as Cambodia and Burma.

So let me ask you what you will do to advance human rights in a country that we have a very strong economic tie to such as Singapore.

Ms. THORNHILL. Thank you for the question.

As I stated in my opening remark, Singapore, since the passage of the Prevention of Human Rights Trafficking in 2015, has made serious advances. In November of 2019, they had their first conviction of two laborers, and this enabled them to go from tier 2 to tier 1. They are making great strides to work hard on detection and more prosecutions.

If I was confirmed as Ambassador, I would work with the Singaporean task force in human trafficking called TIP to see what we could do to increase the prosecutions and help on the victim identification system.

Senator CARDIN. I would just urge you to work also with Reporters Without Borders in regards to the way that they handle free speech in that country. It is a challenge. And we recognize we have a strong economic tie. We recognize it is a relatively small country, but it has a major economic impact. They can do much better. And it is a difficult country for us to get our Western values, from the point of view of protection of freedom of speech and democracy. It is just a country that needs a strong U.S. presence on these issues. Do not be just misled by the economic realities.

I want to ask one more question, if I might, Mr. Chairman, to Mr. Weinstein. First of all, congratulations on getting such a widespread endorsement. So we are not going to hold it against you that you had Joe Lieberman before our committee. We always enjoy his presence.

But I think that does bode well for your diplomacy. If you can bring together these diverse views, it is important. Japan is a critically important country to the United States. And yes, we are going to have to deal with the relationship to strengthen, and we are moving in the right direction with Korea and Japan resolving their historic differences.

But with the United States not in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the trade issues are one that was mentioned. We got to look for ways that we can strengthen the U.S. presence in that region using countries like Japan to help us, because it is going to be important

for the commerce on the China Seas, as well as it will be for the economic tools used by China to try to influence the rules of engagement on trade.

So thank you for your willingness to put yourself forward. I hope you can bring about diverse views in that region as you have in our political system here for your support.

You can respond if you want and try to salvage Joe Lieberman. Mr. WEINSTEIN. Thank you, Senator.

As the third of five boys, you learn to be a bridge builder. [inaudible] in the Indo-Pacific region and thank you for the question.

In the Indo-Pacific region, I think it is absolutely critical that we continue the kind of economic cooperation partnerships that we built these whole-of-government approaches. We have learned from the Japanese in a sense. We were more defense focused. They were more development focused. And now our approaches have merged. And we are now working on whole-of-government approaches to promote, whether it be energy security through the Japan-U.S. energy partnership, whether it be through the digital economy partnership, whether it be through the Mekong energy partnership to work together to provide development assistance to facilitate our businesses, going into countries to make sure that China's Belt and Road with its confiscatory debt burdens, with its telecommunications systems that are an extension of Chinese authoritarianism, the kind of authoritarianism we have seen in Xinjiang and in Tibet, bringing these systems around the world through Huawei and ZTE. These are fundamental dangers to human rights, as China tries to export these models.

So I really look forward to deepening these kind of partnerships with Japan and also to trying to make further progress on the trade issue with Japan, which is critical clearly. We have had the stage 1 agreement and the digital agreement, but we really do need to go further particularly in the auto sector.

So I will leave it at that. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator CARDIN. Well, thank you for the response. Again, I really do applaud you for the endorsements. And it is always good to hear from Joe Lieberman.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

And Senator Shaheen. I know she was with us earlier. Senator Shaheen, are you there?

[No response.]

Senator GARDNER. Senator Kaine, if you want to go and we will come back to Senator Shaheen if she still wishes—actually, Senator Kaine, do you mind if I yield? I see Senator Shaheen just came back.

Senator Shaheen?

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to all of the nominees today for your willingness to consider these very important roles at a particularly challenging time in foreign policy in the world.

I would like to start with you, Mr. Weinstein, because as you know, President Trump has said that he thinks Japan should increase its financial contribution to keep U.S. troops in Japan. As you know also, our presence there, our troop presence there is not welcomed by all Japanese. And so given this pressure and given

the increased military threat posed by China in the region, what are the consequences of raising this issue with an ally on the frontlines of China's aggression while at the same time, we have got some of the economic challenges that you mentioned with Japan? And what message would weakening our relationship with Japan send to China?

Mr. WEINSTEIN. Thank you, Senator, for the question. It is an important one.

Japan and communities in Japan play an incredibly important role in hosting our armed forces. It is, after all, the largest contingent of American service men and women based in any ally around the world, key assets, including the Seventh Fleet. And the burden falls disproportionately. It certainly falls disproportionately upon Okinawa, which is 1 percent of Japanese territory. It has 70 percent of U.S. bases and half the troop presence.

But at the same time, as we engage in this strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific, all of us need to do more. We have seen China's increased aggressiveness around the Senkaku Islands where for over 100 days they have been sending missiles into the territory Japan administers.

So I think that the important role that I would seek to play as Ambassador on these issues would be to stress the importance of the alliance, stress the people-to-people exchanges, note that we all we need to do more, and to just really make the case that we are doing more, Japan needs to do more.

And Prime Minister Abe understands this. He understands this well. Japan has certainly significantly increased its purchases of U.S. military equipment, whether it be the F-35, whether it be the Hawkeye, whether it be the Global Hawk and the likes of. I think that I am optimistic that we will come to some sort of a fruitful conclusion for these host nation support negotiations.

Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, I certainly agree with you about the threat that China poses. I think that is why our relationship with Japan is increasingly important, and we do not want to let any wedge get in between that relationship that is going to affect our security in the Pacific region.

Ms. Thornhill, as you know, Singapore elected a record number of women to parliament during the last election. You talked about your business relationship as a woman and some of the challenges that that presented. So as you think about the challenges facing Singapore, how can you interact with some of those women in parliament to encourage them to address some of the issues, the democracy issues raised by Senator Cardin, and some of the other challenges facing Singapore?

Ms. THORNHILL. As a woman, I was very encouraged by this last election where 27 women were elected to parliament. And, of course, even though she was not just elected, Halimah Yacob, who is the first female President of Singapore, has done an excellent job since 2017. I feel that Singapore is opening up and allowing women to do more and to take a part in the Government and in the ruling.

And may I also say that Cadet Chai just graduated from the U.S. Air Force as the first female Singaporean cadet to graduate. So I just want to plug all these women doing things because I do, as you

can tell, support women making roads for others and being supportive. And I feel that working with Singaporean and other likeminded societies, that I will be able to promote not only equal rights for all and our fundamental freedoms that we, of course, promote in America, but the importance of diversity and inclusiveness because Singapore is a melting pot also, and they have made great strides in everyone being Singaporean. And with that, I would try to increase more diversity and more inclusiveness of women and other people that have not had equal treatment.

Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Ambassador Vajda, understanding that you cannot do much about the State Department's position on UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. Still, it is doing really excellent work with the Rohingya communities in Burma and Bangladesh. In Cox's Bazar, it has the trust of most vulnerable populations who are affected by violence there. One of my staff members had a chance to visit there last year, and she came back with both horrific stories of the violence perpetrated against so many of those women, but also of the good work that UNFPA is doing. And as we think about how we hold some of the people responsible for that violence accountable, the witness that UNFPA is providing is going to be very important in collecting that information.

And so I wonder if you would agree to commit to meeting at least with those representatives as you are trying to address some of those horrific issues around the genocide that is being perpetrated against Rohingya that has fallen disproportionately on women and girls.

Mr. VAJDA. Senator, thank you for that question and those comments.

I had the opportunity to visit the Rohingya refugee camps at Cox's Bazar myself in November 2017. So I was confronted personally and directly with the suffering that they had experienced and spoke to a number of them, many of them women, and I agree that many women suffered disproportionately and extremely during the atrocities undertaken by the Burmese military.

I will say that I think, as I noted in my comments, the United States is providing extraordinary levels of support for the Rohingya, primarily in Bangladesh, also in Burma, \$951 million to date, and we are supporting a range of U.N. and other international organizations that are providing lifesaving work, health, humanitarian assistance, education, sanitation, et cetera.

The State Department also has undertaken its own very significant documentation process that has I think underscored the severity of the gross violations of human rights that took place, and we have shared those with a number of different domestic and international actors.

I think as Ambassador, my role would be to keep an open mind and speak with anybody who can share their perspectives and analysis on what is happening with regard to the Rohingya and that is happening in Burma and to help shape my own perspectives and make policy recommendations back to Washington.

I would like to just make a point of commending Bangladesh. Again, I think of the refugee camp there—just for their extraor-

dinary hospitality and generosity in supporting the Rohingya, but also just underscore that the onus really is on Burma in resolving this crisis and creating the conditions necessary for those refugees to return safely in dignity and voluntarily.

Thank you.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I appreciate both of those comments and your pointing out the willingness of Bangladesh to accept all of those refugees I think is important, particularly given the challenges that that country faces. But that is why the international community needs to do more to pressure Burma to take back the Rohingya and treat them fairly and recognize not only their rights but the rights of other Burmese citizens. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. VAJDA. I agree with you entirely.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator KAINE?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And to my colleagues, Senator Shaheen asked exactly the question that I was going to ask Mr. Weinstein to open about the special agreement with Japan concerning Japan's payment for American military presence and how President Trump has indicated that as that comes up for renegotiation, he would want more. Both Senator Shaheen and I are members of the Armed Services Committee. The continuing presence of U.S. troops there I think is good for Japan, good for the United States, good for the region. And we have both the agreement about compensation, but also the status of forces agreement with Japan concerning the conditions of American troops there, and both of those are always under some review.

But I would just say, Mr. Weinstein, you have a very, very good background and a deep knowledge in these subjects. These combine diplomacy together with sort of a DOD set of necessities, and I hope you will keep not only the Foreign Relations Committee but also the Armed Services Committee informed about the status of those discussions.

Mr. Chair, this is an interesting group of five nominees because in each of the countries that are at issue here, the role of China is very, very important. It may not be a surprise for Burma with a border with China, Singapore with China, Japan, a neighbor with China. But Djibouti, the largest port in Africa has been built with Chinese money in Djibouti, and in Panama China has significant interests on both sides of the Panama Canal in a way that could significantly affect U.S. interests there.

So maybe I will start with Mr. Bethel. As you approach the position of potentially being our Ambassador to Panama, how would you deal with this issue of increased Chinese investment and how that might affect U.S. interests there?

Mr. BETHEL. Thank you, Senator.

When China switched its relationship—excuse me. When Panama switched its relationship from Taiwan to China in 2017, they signed something like 45 separate agreements with China. As you correctly mentioned, China and Hutchinson, known as Panama ports, has concessions on both sides of the canal. China Land Bridge has a very large concession over on the Atlantic side. And

China has made great inroads in Panama, and it is something for us to be aware of.

The first thing I would say is is this. We should welcome competition, and we should not be afraid of competition. However—and the caveat is—it has got to be on a level playing field where everybody plays by the rules. So I think it is important to bring in U.S. businesses to help strengthen institutions, not just in Panama but in other countries, to allow the rules to be played by everybody. And I think you can say a lot of good things about U.S. businesses, but among them, at least by comparative standards, we do things right. We follow the right environmental policies, social policies. We, by and large, have a very good governance system.

And so if I am confirmed, what I would like to do is to do two things: strengthen the institutions, work with the Panamanian people and the Government to strengthen institutions, while at the same time bringing U.S. businesses. And I think the combination of those two would be a good contrast to other actors in the region, including China.

Senator KAINE. That is a good answer, and that is the right strategy. It is hard to do it in reality, but you stated the right strategy.

I just noticed within the last 24 hours some news that was disturbing to me which is the U.S. has, I think, bent over backwards to try to accommodate Saudi Arabia [inaudible]. And within the last 24 hours, there has been an announcement that the Saudis have reached a deal with China to help accelerate the Saudi nuclear program. We had, before this committee within the last week, Marshall Billingslea from the State Department, and we asked him in our interactions with Saudi Arabia around these energy issues would we expect that the Saudis would comply with sort of 123 agreement principles and non-enrichment principles, and he said yes. The U.S. policy is still we can work with the Saudis, but they would have to meet a gold standard for us to assist the civilian nuclear program. [inaudible] yesterday is, well, China—maybe you would rather deal with China because they are not going to have these high expectations.

It would be great if we could insist upon a level playing field. It would be great if we could insist upon high standards. One of the challenges with the U.S.-China relationship in each of these countries that you represent and more generally is we can insist on the right standards, but if there are others who are willing to bend the standards, break them, have no standards, countries might find it in their short-term interests, not their long-term interests, to go with the low bid that does not put expectations on them.

That is my 5 minutes.

But each of you will grapple with this program in significant ways with this dilemma in very significant ways should you be confirmed. I see a lot of action with respect to China by the United States right now. I do not see a lot of coordination or strategy that connects those actions together. I think that is a matter for our committee to be in dialogue with the administration on.

Anyway, congratulations to you.

And, Mr. Chair, I will [inaudible].

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

And I do not believe there are any further Democrat or Republican Senators. If I am wrong, let me know.

Mr. WEINSTEIN. a question for you regarding Japan. You know, obviously, we see North Korea's continued development of a nuclear weapons program. There was public reporting that they may have made some advancements in that nuclear effort.

But what would happen regionally [inaudible] Japan, as well as Korea and others in your opinion, should North Korea continue in its nuclear program develop a warhead of capable of traveling on an ICBM effectively? What sort of arms scenario do you see developing in Asia at that point?

Mr. WEINSTEIN. Thank you for the question.

The North Korea nuclear program is a major challenge. It is a major challenge that we face together with the Japanese, and it is a challenge that requires us to be vigilant at the highest levels and to seek to promote both negotiations with the North Koreans but also to boost our deterrent capability to make sure that we do not get to the kind of scenario that you outlined.

I think the Japanese have been very clear. They have no interest in developing nuclear weapons whatsoever. But the danger of proliferation in the region to other powers certainly is a possibility. So that requires us to really continue our engagement with North Korea but to be absolutely firm boosting the deterrent and boosting our missile defense, working together with the Japanese, working together with the Republic of Korea and with our other allies to make sure that such a scenario does not come to fruition.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Weinstein.

Mr. Vajda, I had the opportunity to visit Burma in the days following the last election when Aung San Suu Kyi's government was able to secure some significant gains, and they had a countdown or I guess a count-up, so to speak, a ticker on the top of their newspapers saying that it is 50 days since this new government or 100 days since this new government. And they were talking about the results.

With the election coming up, has this government delivered the kinds of reforms or changes that the people of Burma had hoped for to help ensure success going forward and away from some of the military aspects of elections?

Mr. VAJDA. Thank you for that question, Mr. Chairman.

Obviously, the Burmese will render their own judgment when they go to the polls on November 8th. My own assessment is that there had been, in fact, some early progress under the new civilian administration. Obviously, there were tremendous expectations.

I think it is fair to assess, though, that there had been some slowing on some of those reforms and some stagnation as well. I think we are concerned that we still see some constraints on religious freedom, on freedom of expression, sometimes using some of the military or even colony era laws.

And I think one of the key elements I think looking ahead at the election is will it be free and fair. Will it be inclusive? And will it ideally usher in I think renewed momentum on the democratic and governance path? There is no doubt that with any government Burma faces enormous challenges of poverty, of ethnic strife, of

undue pressure from China next door. In that respect, I think Burma is really exhibit A for some of China's pernicious behavior.

But I think it is our role and our commitment to help support some of those institutions and help with progress towards creating better governance and helping to meet the aspirations of all of Burma's people. And that I think is the expectation we can levy of any government, any civilian government in Burma, and I think it then becomes our role to help assist it towards that goal.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you for that answer.

I think one of the tools that we provided within the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act for Burma was language similar to what we did in Africa with Power Africa. We created the Power Burma provisions because, you know, conversations about progress economically, stable electricity are very important to Burma, and we could help bring that expertise from the United States. So I hope that is a tool that we will utilize.

Ms. Thornhill, to Singapore, obviously they are a trade partner of the United States and certainly China, an incredibly important trade partner for Singapore as well. How does the United States assure that we are present and not allowing a tilt in the relationship toward China versus the United States but make sure that we are playing this on a—keeping this on a level playing field in relationships?

Ms. THORNHILL. Thank you for that question.

China's maritime assertiveness in the South China Sea is a challenge for the region and troublesome for all the region. The United States and Singapore both promote a unified ASEAN, and both look forward to a meaningful conclusion of the code of conduct between ASEAN and China taking into account international law and, of course, UNCLOS.

Singapore has openly stated that they respect the international law. In fact, of recent, there was a phone call between Secretary Pompeo and the foreign minister stating that they must respect international law, which is, of course, freedom of navigation and overflight with unimpeded lawful commerce.

Singapore is a city-state that is totally dependent on trade, as America is also dependent. But they know their entire livelihood is important. They are totally aware of the fact that \$4 trillion worth of goods go by the South China Sea isles, and \$1 million of that is U.S. goods. So I believe that we would work together. I would work behind the scenes with the Singaporean Government to help tilt them a bit more towards our direction.

Prime Minister Lee in his endangered Asian century article, made a comment that it was time for China to step up and not expect the privileges of a third world country anymore, to step up to global norms and abide by them, but not only abide but respect them and promote them because China has prospered so much by these that it is only right for them to do.

In his statement, I felt for the first time that Prime Minister Lee has tilted a bit towards America because he also stated what the U.S. has done for the region, how the U.S. has been open and sharing and given back in our business relations. So I know that my presence there, if I am confirmed—I would work very hard with the

Singaporean authorities to help them understand [inaudible] to take more of a stand [inaudible] in the South China Sea.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Ms. Thornhill.

Quickly because I know I am running out of time here, to Mr. Pratt and Mr. Bethel. The obvious implications of the China relationship, what it means in the two countries that you will be serving in, mean a great deal, and the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act provides additional tools to our Indo-Pacific ambassadors. What more in the toolbox could you use to help address concerns with China in Panama, in Djibouti? Mr. Pratt? Mr. Bethel? I will turn to Mr. Bethel first, and then we will go to Mr. Pratt. But quickly. Thank you.

Mr. BETHEL. Thank you for the question, Senator.

We have a number of tools in our toolbox. We have a newly repurposed DFC, formerly known as OPIC. We have the U.S. Ex-Im Bank. We have trillions of dollars in financial assets around the world that could be—U.S. assets, pension funds and so forth that could be deployed to Panama. We have a robust private sector, and we have a very strong commercial business and cultural relationship with Panama. So I think if we were able to harness all of those tools, we could be extremely successful, not that we have not been, not that our relationship with Panama is strained at all, but perhaps there are ways to improve that relationship.

And I will reiterate what I mentioned earlier with respect to China. We should welcome competition. It has just got to be fair. Places where you have seen China enter are those like Venezuela and others are places that lack the rule of law and strong institutions. And if I am fortunate to get confirmed, I look forward to working with the Panamanians to strengthen all institutions and to help American companies, American businesses, American financial capital, and our own government institutions to be as successful as possible for the benefit of ourselves, obviously, but also for the benefit of the Panamanian people.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Bethel.

Mr. PRATT. quickly.

Mr. PRATT. Sir, thank you for the question.

As I said previously, we are very concerned about the debt sustainability, and so we will continue to look at this Debt Sustainability Initiative. I think the Power Africa initiative is also very important, and with our U.S. companies looking to get into that sector, two different companies are there now. I think that can be important. And I would not rule out maybe looking at the BUILD Act to look at potential for infrastructure. We do not want China to be the only partner of choice for infrastructure in Africa.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Pratt.

Senator Merkley, would you like to continue with a second round?

Senator MERKLEY. Yes. Yes, I would.

And, Mr. Weinstein, I wanted to ask you. Until recently, you were chairman of the board of governors of the U.S. Agency for Global Media, which was recently disbanded. And in that effort, we hire foreign journalists who often are involved in writing stories that are not complimentary to their home countries, including Chinese journalists not doing complimentary stories about China.

Recently, the J-1 visas have not been renewed for those correspondents. Some of them are within days of having to return to their home country and are at risk of potential abuse by their home governments. Should those J-1 visas be renewed and protect those foreign journalists who are serving our country?

Mr. WEINSTEIN. Well, thank you, Senator Merkley, for the question.

Let me note that I have immense respect for the journalists at the Voice of America and at the other entities of the U.S. Agency for Global Media. I had the honor of chairing the board for several years. These were dedicated professionals, many of whom come from challenging environments.

Let me just note that this is a decision that the CEO and the new management of the agency will make. The 2016-2017 legislation creating a Senate-confirmed CEO for U.S. International Broadcasting eliminated the Senate-confirmed bipartisan board. And so this is a decision that the new management will make, and I have, frankly, not been in touch with the new management since they have taken over.

Thank you.

Senator MERKLEY. Okay, but that does not really answer the question. You were deeply involved in this. You know the role of these journalists. You know the risk they are at. And we here in Congress can play a role on encouraging the administration to protect those journalists, not send them home. Is that something you would encourage us to do?

Mr. WEINSTEIN. Look, it is a challenging question. I would encourage Congress to play the oversight role that it has to and to do it in a diligent manner and to do so, particularly as you feel strongly on this issue.

Senator MERKLEY. I think you are going to be a very good diplomat for the United States overseas.

I would just say to my colleagues of both parties let us take a look at this because this is a real concern for some who will be returned and possibly imprisoned or tortured for having served the United States in this journalistic capacity here in the United States.

I wanted to return back, Ms. Thornhill, just to be absolutely clear. I know we were interrupted by some technical difficulties and also by time. But it sounded like you were saying you did not know much about the organization that you donated to. You are probably aware that James O'Keefe hired a woman to try to discredit victims of sexual attacks, victims of Roy Moore. I am assuming you did not approve of that effort to undermine the reputation or legitimacy of those sexual assault victims and are not an advocate for Project Veritas. It was more or less almost an accidental donation. Is that accurate?

Ms. THORNHILL. I went to support my friend. I knew nothing about Mr. O'Keefe or the organization. I was supporting an old friend as I would normally do because she asked me to come. I went and supported and donated. And that was 7 or 8 years ago and have not had any contact, nor do I know anything of what you are referring to, sir.

Senator MERKLEY. And you did not support their use of fake videos or an effort to undermine sexual assault victims' legitimacy?

Ms. THORNHILL. No. I am a strong advocate for [inaudible]. As you know from my background, from human rights and, of course, the rights of women, that we promote everyone equal treatment for all.

Senator MERKLEY. I just wanted to help you put that on the record since it has been raised and we can clear that up and set that aside.

Mr. VAJDA. I am very concerned about the circumstances in Burma as many of my colleagues have raised it. As you know from our previous conversation, I led a congressional delegation to go and try to visit the areas in which Muslims are held and to look at the villages that were burned. Aung San Suu Kyi had invited the world to come and see and said they had nothing to hide, and then they blocked the world from seeing those sites.

Will you ask to be able to go to those sites yourself in your position, once confirmed?

Mr. VAJDA. Thank you for that question, Ranking Member, and I appreciate your interest in pursuing your own direct ability to observe what had happened in northern Rakhine State.

My understanding is that the U.S. embassy regularly seeks access to those areas, not just for themselves but importantly, for humanitarian agencies, [inaudible] access is critical and also for the media so that, as you note, the world can see what is actually happening. I understand, as you also noted, that that access is often denied.

It would absolutely be my intent to be able to get there and have members of my team get there, if I am confirmed and if I arrive in Burma, to be able to see for ourselves and to be able to report back accurately to Washington and to use what we see to be able to inform our policies so we can be as effective as possible and having the greatest influence in working towards our goals of human rights and return of the Rohingya under safe, dignified conditions and really working towards the long-term needs of that community as identified by the Annan Commission, which we support.

Senator MERKLEY. Thank you. I think even though it is likely you will be denied, I think it is important to ask for access because it is a horrific situation and we should not let—it continues—situations continue. The camps, the internally displaced person camps, are still a horrific situation for so many who are trapped in them, the denial of citizenship, the removal of former citizenship, the assaults and the abuse, and it is important that we continue to stand up for people who are treated in that manner.

I wanted to also encourage you to press hard on the upcoming elections and try to make sure that everyone who had been eligible to vote in previous elections will be allowed to vote in this next election, including the Rohingya.

Mr. VAJDA. Thank you. Thank you, Ranking Member. I share that goal. I think it is right this process—the election is as inclusive as possible and actually can speak to the political needs and interests of all the people of Burma. It will be hugely important.

Senator MERKLEY. It is often pointed out that despite the gravity of the situation, the U.S. never completed the process of declaring it a genocide. Should the U.S. complete that process?

Mr. VAJDA. Senator, I know you raised this also with Secretary Pompeo in his recent testimony. He has said that our main goal is to change behavior on the ground, to promote accountability and justice, and to avoid any recurrence of these widespread atrocities. And he has made clear that we will review our actions with that goal in mind.

I can simply affirm personally that my intention, if I am confirmed, would be to arrive in Burma, assess the situation, collect information, gather the advice of my colleagues, and make my best recommendations back to Washington how we achieve the goals of accountability and justice.

Senator MERKLEY. Well, thank you. I think it does undermine our credibility that we chose, despite the recommendation of numerous international organizations, [inaudible] to be a genocide. It seems to have been an effort not to offend the Government of Burma. I just think we have to speak truth to the situations. When genocide occurs, we need to call it out and all it what it is. And [inaudible] the United States has not done so, and I hope you will advocate for doing so once you evaluate the circumstances on the ground.

Mr. VAJDA. Thank you, Senator.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Senator Merkley.

And thanks to all of the witnesses today for attending the hearing and for your willingness to serve and for providing us with your testimony and answers today.

For the information of members, the record will remain open until the close of business Thursday. That is tomorrow, August 6th, including for members to submit questions for the record.

I kindly ask the witnesses to respond as promptly as possible, and your responses will be made a part of the record.

With the thanks of the committee, this hearing is now adjourned. [Whereupon, at 12:44 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO ERIK PAUL BETHEL BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. Panama hosts thousands of Colombian, Venezuelan, and Nicaraguan refugees and asylum seekers. Panama is also a transit country for extra-regional migrants, thousands of whom are stranded as a result of the COVID-19 state of emergency. If confirmed, what specific policies and programs will you prioritize regarding refugees and migrants in Panama?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue the State Department's engagement with Panama to encourage lawful and humane alternatives to its "controlled flow" policy of allowing irregular migration through Panamanian territory and encourage the Government to deport irregular migrants after collecting relevant data and consistent with international law. I will also engage the State Department and the interagency to continue supporting, through our international humanitarian partners, migration management and asylum capacity building for the Government of Panama so that we may continue a shared, regional approach to addressing irregular migration and providing international protection to those in need.

Question. What is your assessment of the enduring impact of Panama's decision to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan?

Answer. In June of 2017, under the previous administration of Juan Carlos Varela, Panama established diplomatic ties with Beijing. Over the following two years, Panama signed 45 bilateral agreements with the PRC and conducted negotiations towards a free trade agreement. The Cortizo Government has exercised greater oversight of PRC projects. Through its donations of medical supplies to support Panama's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan showed its generosity, leadership, and continued reliability as a partner. If confirmed, I will urge Panama to approach relations with the PRC cautiously and to reestablish economic and cultural ties with Taiwan.

Question. What is your assessment of the implications for U.S. national security of the Government of China's increased investment in the region around the Panama Canal, including investment and construction of a new bridge over the canal?

Answer. If confirmed, I will urge Panama to approach relations with China with greater caution and will push for international best practices in terms of governance and transparency. Panama and the United States must ensure that assets such as the Panama Canal, port terminals, energy transmission/generation, copper mines, and telecommunications maintain the highest standards and remain free of corruption for the Panamanian people. The Cortizo Government continues to engage with the PRC across a number of areas, but has taken important steps to re-examine and proceed more cautiously on projects. If confirmed, I plan to work to advance U.S. interests and as appropriate to question the motivations of the PRC in Panama.

Question. What is your assessment of the implications for U.S. economic security of the Government of China's increased investment in the region around the Panama Canal, including investment and construction of a new bridge over the canal?

Answer. Panama and the United States have a longstanding historical relationship centered on the Panama Canal. We are the Canal's top user with 68 percent of all transits are going to or coming from a U.S. port. The United States welcomes competition with China on a level playing field where all play by the rules and respect environmental, social, and labor standards. Opaque tenders, lack of transparency in the procurement process, and the perception of unfair treatment of western companies vis-a-vis China diminish the attractiveness of Panama as an investment destination. If confirmed, I commit to helping Panama enforce the highest standards of integrity and transparency to ensure a competitive environment for U.S. businesses.

Question. What is your assessment of Panama's participation in the Government of China's Belt and Road initiative?

Answer. The Cortizo Government continues to engage with the PRC across a number of areas, but has taken important steps to re-examine, and in some cases proceed more cautiously on, projects and other areas of engagement with the PRC. The United States welcomes competition with China on a level playing field where all play by the rules and respect environmental and labor standards. If confirmed, I will urge Panama to approach relations with China with caution and push for international best practices in terms of transparency.

Question. If confirmed, what steps would you take to encourage U.S. businesses to invest in Panama?

Answer. Panama and the United States enjoy a strong and longstanding trade relationship, which has only improved since the U.S.-Panama Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA) entered into force in October 2012. Since then, U.S. exports have increased every year. The U.S.-Panama TPA supports American jobs, expands markets, and enhances U.S. competitiveness by guaranteeing access to Panama's dynamic services market. If confirmed, I will continue our whole-of-government work to catalyze private sector investment in infrastructure development under the America Crece initiative and work with the Government of Panama and USTR to further strengthen market access for U.S. companies and to ensure that U.S. products continue to be the preferred choice for Panamanian consumers.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit that under your leadership, the U.S. Embassy will not take any action to support, promote, or participate in any matters related to, or that could be perceived as benefitting, the Trump Organization?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to make clear to all employees that retaliation of any kind has no place in federal government and will not be tolerated under your leadership? Do you agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be held fully accountable, up to and including losing their job?

Answer. Yes. I commit to ensuring that retaliation has no place in the federal government and will not be tolerated. I agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be subject to accountability and discipline in accordance with U.S. federal laws and regulation.

Question. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups in the Foreign Service?

Answer. Diversity makes teams stronger in terms of creativity and productivity. If confirmed, I intend to engage the resources of the State Department as well as my own experience to foster an inclusive and respectful environment that allows all voices to be heard. I also intend to continue the proactive approach to diversity that I modeled from my time in the private sector and at the World Bank, which included recruiting and mentoring individuals from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups.

Question. Do you commit to respond promptly to all requests for information by members of this committee?

Answer. Yes, with the understanding that any such response would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

Question. Do you commit to appear before this committee upon request?

Answer. Yes, with the understanding that any such appearance would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

Question. Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any credible allegations of foreign interference in U.S. elections?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any attempts by foreign or private individuals to improperly influence U.S. foreign policy, particularly if you have reason to believe those efforts are adverse to U.S. interests?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. If you become aware of any suspected waste, fraud, or abuse in the Department, do you commit to report it to the Inspector General or other appropriate channels?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. If confirmed, I will seek to advance multilateral strategies that support human rights and democracy. I dedicated my career to working at the crossroads of finance and emerging markets, most recently at the World Bank. While there, I worked to support human rights by vetting and approving over \$80 billion worth of loans, grants, guarantees, and investments to promote the Bank's twin goals of eliminating poverty and promoting shared prosperity and their strong elements of promoting social and environmental sustainability and protecting vulnerable individuals. I worked intensely on projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Uganda to combat the abuse of women and girls.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Panama? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. Panama is a strong partner of the United States, whose cooperation is vital to U.S. efforts to promote democracy throughout the region. In many ways,

Panama is a model for others in the region to emulate. Challenges remain, including corruption, freedom of expression (including by members of the press), and addressing economic inequality. The United States supports Panama's efforts to investigate and prosecute officials accused of corruption. Panama also needs to continue to strengthen its democratic institutions and to increase transparency and counter money laundering.

If confirmed, I commit to supporting democratic development in Panama through coordinated U.S. Government programs and outreach aimed at strengthening Panama's institutions fighting corruption, and bolstering civil society.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Panama? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. Panama is a strong democracy and, in many ways, is a model for other countries in the region. Over the past 30 years, Panamanians elected five presidents from three political parties in free and fair elections. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that Panama's success is more inclusive and to assisting the Government to eliminate corrupt influences within its institutions. I will also seek to strengthen democratic norms in Panama through our diplomatic engagements with Panamanian authorities, public messaging, and U.S. assistance programs supporting anticorruption efforts and the rule of law. Question 18: How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to ensure U.S. assistance aligns with our important policy goals of supporting democratic institutions, fighting corruption, and upholding the rule of law in Panama. U.S. assistance is a key tool we can use to help strengthen Panama's judicial institutions and support President Cortizo's anticorruption efforts. If confirmed, I will make capacity building a key priority to help the Panamanian Government address these critical issues.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Panama? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to meet with such organizations, both in the United States and in Panama. I hope to strengthen efforts to build the integrity of public institutions and increase transparency. I will use my position to promote a safe environment that enables NGOs and other civil society actors to operate without fear.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will make it a point to meet with people from across the political spectrum and from all walks of life. As the United States Ambassador to Panama, it will be incumbent on me to establish contacts among the broadest group of interlocutors possible. If confirmed, I will not only engage with government and political parties but also with members of civil society, including independent media, community organizations, and labor, environmental, and human rights organizations and activists. I will also reach out to youth, minority, and women's groups on matters of interest and importance to the Mission.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Panama on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Panama?

Answer. Supporting an active and free press is a fundamental part of State Department engagement overseas. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will work diligently across the Mission team to promote the importance of a free press with Panamanian officials, while using vehicles such as our International Visitor Leadership Program to share international best practices with Panamanian journalists. A free and fair press is critical to a healthy democracy, and I will continue the Mission's efforts to directly engage in the promotion of freedom of expression in Panama.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in Panama?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will work with the Embassy team to engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering the disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state (or non-state) actors in Panama. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Panamanian Government to deter and counter malign influence by the PRC and other governments whose policies are inimical to U.S. interests, and to help Panama solidify its awareness of the pitfalls represented by increasing proximity to the PRC. I will also encourage Mission Panama to continue developing positive responses and information to use to counter disinformation and propaganda campaigns.

Question. Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Panama on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the U.S. Embassy team to engage diplomatically with the appropriate ministries in the Panamanian Government on labor issues, including the freedom of association for all, including independent trade unions. I believe active dialogue with labor organizations and activists, as well as accurate reporting on labor conditions, is an important responsibility of the State Department and, if confirmed, I will lead the Embassy in prioritizing both outreach and reporting.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Panama, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity? What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Panama? What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Panama?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support the efforts of the State Department to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Panama. I am deeply committed to human dignity and respect for all people and will follow all State Department guidelines to address this issue with respect, tolerance, and compassion.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO ERIK PAUL BETHEL BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. What are your most meaningful achievements to date in your career to promote human rights and democracy?

- What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to advancing strategies that support human rights and democracy.

I dedicated my career to working at the crossroads of finance and emerging markets, most recently at the World Bank.

While there, I worked to support human rights by vetting and approving over \$80 billion worth of loans, grants, guarantees, and investments to promote the Bank's twin goals of eliminating poverty and promoting shared prosperity, with strong elements of promoting social and environmental sustainability, and protecting vulnerable individuals.

I worked intensely on projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Uganda to combat the abuse of women and girls.

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues in Panama?

- What are the most important steps you expect to take if confirmed to promote human rights and democracy in Panama?
- What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. Panama is a strong partner of the United States and has made significant strides to address human rights.

However, Panama still faces a number of challenges.

Panama should do more to protect indigenous communities, address gender-based violence issues, strengthen the rights of underserved people, and help curb human trafficking.

Panama's press appears hampered by politically motivated censorship and criminal libel lawsuits.

If confirmed, I will work diligently with the Panamanian Government and its people, as well as with all U.S. stakeholders, on these concerns.

Our relationship with Panama is based on our shared values, and continuing to partner with the Government of Panama to address these issues will positively impact our broader relationship.

Question. If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Panama in advancing human rights, civil society, and democracy in general?

Answer. Although Panama has made significant strides in addressing human rights issues, challenges still remain.

Obstacles to addressing these issues may include underfunded institutions; entrenched interests that resist change; lack of economic opportunity that exacerbates Panama's wealth inequality; impunity and the rule of law; and corruption.

These are some of the obstacles to addressing the development of democracy and development of civil society.

If confirmed, I commit to working with the Panamanian Government, non-governmental organizations, and the many U.S. Government agencies that work in this area to overcome these obstacles and further strengthen Panama's human rights record.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Panama?

- If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

Answer. Yes.

If confirmed, I commit to meet with such organizations, both in the United States and in Panama.

If confirmed, I hope to also strengthen efforts to build the integrity of public institutions and increase transparency.

I also commit to support implementation of the Leahy Law and to work with Embassy staff to make sure that the provision of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Panama to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by Panama?

Answer. Political prisoners and the unjust targeting of individuals is of serious concern to the United States.

If confirmed, I will ensure that the Embassy engages with the various elements involved with criminal justice in Panama, both governmental and non-governmental, to encourage further respect for rule of law, including with respect to human rights.

Question. Will you engage with Panama on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

Answer. Yes.

I believe our engagement with Panama should be guided by our longstanding values of freedom, democracy, individual liberty, and human dignity.

Our engagement should seek to strengthen rule of law, combat corruption, and promote inclusive prosperity.

If confirmed, I will stand ready to assist the Government of Panama to continue to make positive improvements in these areas.

Question. Research from private industry demonstrates that, when managed well, diversity makes business teams better both in terms of creativity and in terms of productivity.

- What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups?

Answer. Diversity makes teams better in terms of creativity and productivity.

If confirmed, I intend to promote an inclusive and respectful environment that allows all voices to be heard.

I also intend to continue the proactive approach to diversity that I modeled from my time in the private sector and at the World Bank, which included recruiting and mentoring individuals from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups.

Question. What steps will you take to ensure each of the supervisors at the Embassy in Panama are fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to promoting an inclusive work environment by holding the Embassy leadership team accountable for their conduct, in keeping with State Department values.

Question. Do you commit to bring to the committee's attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect may be influenced by any of the President's business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?

Answer. Yes.

I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to inform the committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action in order to benefit any of the President's business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?

Answer. Yes.

If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise any concerns that I may have through the appropriate channels.

Question. Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in Panama?

Answer. My investment portfolio includes a broad range of asset classes, some of which may hold interests in companies with a presence in the Republic of Panama. My investment portfolio also includes security interests, including stocks, in companies, some of which may have a presence in the Republic of Panama. I am committed to following all applicable ethics laws and regulations and remaining vigilant with regard to my ethics obligations.

Question. How do you believe political corruption impacts democratic governance and the rule of law generally, and in Panama specifically?

Answer. I believe political corruption in the region prevents countries from achieving their economic potential.

Panama is no exception.

I understand that corruption remains a key concern for Panamanians.

If confirmed, I seek to support the Cortizo administration's efforts to fight corruption, uphold the rule of law, foster transparency, and promote good governance.

I understand that Panama has taken a leadership role in the region for its efforts to improve transparency by digitizing key administrative and regulatory practices.

If confirmed, I will continue to promote accountability and encourage the Panamanian Government to take action to prevent, investigate, and prosecute corruption.

Question. What is your assessment of corruption trends in Panama and efforts to address and reduce it by that government?

Answer. My understanding is that although the Panamanian Government has made good progress in many areas, corruption remains a key challenge.

In 2019, Transparency International ranked Panama 101 out of the 180 countries in the perception of corruption ranking.

Corruption was also a major issue for voters in the May 2019 election, and I am encouraged to see that President Cortizo established new anticorruption controls in July to address transparency issues in COVID-19 related procurement.

We share Panama's goal of fortifying its institutions to detect, investigate, prevent, and punish corrupt acts, and I look forward to advancing our continued partnership with the Panamanian Government and people to address this important issue if I am confirmed.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to strengthen good governance and anticorruption programming in Panama?

Answer. If confirmed, I will speak out against corrupt influences in Panamanian institutions through our diplomatic engagements with Panamanian authorities, public messaging, and regional U.S. assistance programs supporting anticorruption efforts and strengthening of the rule of law.

If confirmed, I will seek to offer continued support for efforts to improve transparency in Panama's judicial system to uphold rule of law.

In addition, I am committed to considering all appropriate deterrence tools at the State Department's disposal, including visa restrictions and Global Magnitsky Act

sanctions, to promote accountability for those involved in, and benefiting from, significant acts of corruption in Panama.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO JONATHAN PRATT BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. Djibouti stands at the crossroads of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, the gateway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Despite its small size, it's the recipient of considerable investment and attention from countries in Africa, the Gulf, Europe and Asia due to its strategic location. France, Italy, China and Japan all have bases there. The U.S. has more than 4,500 troops at Camp Lemonier. It's our only enduring military base on the continent, and with the President's abrupt decision to relocate troops from Stuttgart, the home of U.S. Africa Command, Camp Lemonier takes on an even greater importance, especially with regards to its counterterrorism activities:

- What strategic interests does the United States have along the Red Sea Corridor?

Answer. The Red Sea is a critical region to global security and commerce. It is estimated that more than ten percent of world trade and roughly 15 percent of global oil production passes through the Red Sea on a yearly basis.

Russia, China, and other actors are working to increase their presence and influence in the region due to security and economic considerations. This complicates already challenging relations between the countries in the region. Stabilization in the Horn should remain a priority for the international community. We welcome recent initiatives by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Red Sea Council to bring together countries in the region to increase dialogue on challenges and opportunities in the Red Sea area.

Question. What is the administration's strategy to pursue those interests?

Answer. Our overall objective is to promote greater cooperation on regional security and economic issues among Red Sea nations, and to ensure continued stability and freedom of commerce and navigation. The Department of State has begun closer coordination between the African and Near Eastern bureaus on issues in the Red Sea arena. State also sent participants to the USIP and DoD organized Red Sea Forum events in Jordan and Washington, DC, which brought together regional and interested countries. Mission Djibouti's top priority is to continue to ensure unimpeded access for U.S. forces to the Djiboutian air and seaports so that U.S. forces can continue their important security and stabilization work in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf region. Our bilateral Ambassador to Djibouti also serves as our diplomatic representative to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Horn of Africa's regional organization. IGAD also plays a role in Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean issues.

Question. What priorities will you set in order to pursue them if confirmed as Ambassador?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize pursuing U.S. interests in the Red Sea region by working closely with colleagues across the U.S. inter-agency to include coordination with my counterparts at our embassies in the region. I will also pursue an active role in IGAD to the extent I am able to do so, including on issues related to the Red Sea, and I plan to support USIP and other initiatives that promote stability in the region.

Question. If confirmed, how will you balance U.S. strategic interests with the pursuit of greater respect for democratic principles and practices in Djibouti, where President Ismaël Guelleh has been criticized as both corrupt and authoritarian?

Answer. Advancement of democracy in Djibouti is a key component of our bilateral relationship. We assess that improved democratization in Djibouti will support its internal stability and also assure the long-term viability of our bilateral relationship and our military base. For this reason, our embassy and high-level U.S. Government officials regularly raise democracy and good governance concerns with Djiboutian officials, including detailed discussions about electoral reforms advocated by the African Union and the need for strengthened rule of law. Our embassy leadership and staff also maintain dialogue with the opposition and civil society to ensure that we remain in contact with all representative elements of Djiboutian society. If confirmed, I will continue this important work.

The UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey have increased their military presence along the coast of the Horn of Africa, expanding and increasing activity throughout the Red Sea Corridor:

Question. What mechanisms are in place at the State Department to coordinate strategies, programs, and policies implemented by the Africa and Near-East-Asia bureaus relative to the Red Sea Corridor?

Answer. The Department of State has begun closer coordination between the African and Near Eastern bureaus on issues in the Red Sea arena. I was not involved but I understand the NEA and AF bureaus co-hosted a session during the 2020 Chiefs of Mission Conference to bring together U.S. chiefs of mission from the region to discuss and coordinate on Red Sea issues.

Question. How will you work with the two bureaus, as well as Ambassadors in countries along the Red Sea Corridor, if confirmed, to ensure you are fully informed on relevant policies and priorities?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to build on AF's and NEA's coordination efforts to ensure that we develop collaborative approaches to Red Sea issues. Through annual and other periodic gatherings with Chiefs of Mission, I will strive to ensure that Red Sea issues are included in the agenda, and that there is increased information sharing and, where appropriate, joint reporting from our missions in the region. If confirmed, I will identify individuals within my mission to strategically include Red Sea issues as part of their portfolios to ensure that we are continuously engaged on these issues. I will also maintain our dialogue with IGAD's Executive Secretary, based at IGAD headquarters in Djibouti, on that regional organization's policies and activities regarding Red Sea issues.

Question. How would you evaluate the political atmosphere in the run up to elections, which are slated for next year—is there a level playing field for all political actors?

Answer. President Ismaël Omar Guelleh has led Djibouti since 1999. Near the end of his second term in 2010, parliament amended the constitution to abolish term limits. He has since won reelection two more times, despite vowing that his 2011 reelection would be his last. The 2016 election, which he won with nearly 88% of the vote, was marred by reports of government harassment of opposition supporters and restrictions on the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, including for members of the press.

Our embassy leadership has specifically engaged the Djiboutian Government on the arrests of human rights activists, as well as opposition members, a concerning issue which we will continue to raise in the future. Our embassy leadership has also raised with the Interior minister specific electoral reforms recommended by the African Union's observer mission following 2018 legislative elections.

Question. What programs and activities are currently underway to help support credible elections in Djibouti? What will you do, if confirmed, to support a credible election outcome?

Answer. Our embassy and high-level U.S. Government officials regularly raise democracy and good governance concerns with Djiboutian officials, including detailed discussions about electoral reforms advocated by the African Union. Our embassy leadership and staff also maintain dialogue with the opposition and civil society to ensure that we remain in contact with all representative elements of Djiboutian society. To promote better governance, our embassy works with civil society organizations to build operational capacity and to increase the participation of Djiboutians in public service delivery. We also support programs to combat gender-based violence and promote women's empowerment and to promote press freedom by building the capacity of Djiboutian journalists.

In early June, Mohamed Ibrahim Wais and Kassim Nouh Abar journalists working for La Voix de Djibouti, an independent media outlet, were arrested.

Question. Are the two men still in custody, and if so on what charges?

Answer. Mohamed Ibrahim Wais was released on June 10, 2020, and Kassim Nouh Abar was released on June 8, 2020. I am not aware that they are currently facing charges.

Question. What led to their arrest?

Answer. I understand both were arrested after seeking information about Lt. Fouad Youssouf Ali—a Djiboutian air force pilot who circulated videos critical of President Guelleh's government—and his conditions under detention. Lt. Fouad

Youssef Ali is charged with attempting to steal a Djiboutian air force plane, and wrecking it in the process.

Question. What does their arrest indicate about the state of free media in Djibouti?

Answer. The Government does not support freedom of expression, including for members of the press. The dominant newspaper, television station, and radio station are all state-owned and operated. State-controlled media outlets generally does not criticize government leaders or policies. The Government's harassment and detention of journalists often results in widespread self-censorship. While intimidation tactics have not risen to the level of killings and disappearances, pressure tactics include extrajudicial arrests and the kidnapping of journalists. The vibrant public reaction to the arrests voiced on social media indicate that platforms such as Facebook and Twitter now offer a new outlet for the Djiboutian public and diaspora to openly voice their opinions.

Question. What programs and activities are State or USAID supporting in the area of media freedoms?

Answer. We support programs to build the capacity of Djiboutian journalists, including providing platforms for discussion with other local media, training on investigative journalism, capacity building, and support for journalism students. Additionally, we help Djibouti build regional and international relations with the committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Amnesty International, and other organizations.

Question. What steps will you take to support independent media if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I will aim to support programming that promotes investigative journalism in Djibouti. I will continue to build on the Mission's engagement with the Djiboutian Government on the importance of press freedom. We will also support the growth of internet penetration in Djibouti and welcome open public discussion on social media platforms.

Oversight

Question. If confirmed, do you commit that under your leadership, the U.S. Embassy will not take any action to support, promote, or participate in any matters related to, or that could be perceived as benefitting, the Trump Organization?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to make clear to all employees that retaliation of any kind has no place in federal government and will not be tolerated under your leadership? Do you agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be held fully accountable, up to and including losing their job?

Answer. I commit to make clear to all employees that prohibited personnel practices will not be tolerated under my leadership. I agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be held accountable and subject to discipline consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Department policy.

Question. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups in the Foreign Service? In the Civil Service?

Answer. As I have done in the past, I plan to recruit a highly diverse team and I plan to mentor and support all of the people on my team. Throughout my career I have put a particular emphasis on encouraging employees from diverse backgrounds to remain in the Foreign Service and in the Civil Service, part of which means supporting them to find the best possible onward assignments that will make them competitive for promotion and advancement. If confirmed, I plan to ensure that the entire embassy is focused on promoting and supporting diversity and that we have regular discussions on the tools we are using to achieve that goal. I plan to take all of these steps to support Foreign Service, Civil Service and locally-recruited employees. In regards to locally-recruited U.S. Government employees, I will review considerations of diversity in the Djiboutian context as they pertain to outreach programs in favor of underrepresented groups.

Question. Do you commit to respond promptly to all requests for information by members of this committee?

Answer. Yes, with the understanding that any such response would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

Question. Do you commit to appear before this committee upon request?

Answer. Yes, with the understanding that any such response would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

Question. Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any credible allegations of foreign interference in U.S. elections?

Answer. Yes, I understand and value the importance of our nation's democracy and the essential role that elections play in it. I will report to appropriate authorities any credible allegations of foreign interference in U.S. elections.

Question. Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any attempts by foreign or private individuals to improperly influence U.S. foreign policy, particularly if you have reason to believe those efforts are adverse to U.S. interests?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit to report any such credible information to the appropriate authorities.

Question. If you become aware of any suspected waste, fraud, or abuse in the Department, do you commit to report it to the Inspector General or other appropriate channels?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Democracy/Human Rights

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. The most important actions I have taken to support democracy and human rights in my career are helping reach a peace agreement in 2002 in the Democratic Republic of Congo during my first assignment in the Foreign Service, and helping implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement from 2007-2009 in Sudan. These peace agreements meant that villages in both countries that had previously changed hands multiple times during conflict, exposing these populations to repeated rape and other violence, could begin the long process of healing and rebuilding. The end to both wars also allowed elections to move forward in these countries at national and local levels. Later in my career, in Pakistan, I helped organize U.S. observation efforts of two successful elections, in a country previously ruled by military dictators. I also advocated regularly for the release of people falsely accused of blasphemy, as well as for reform of the blasphemy laws, and for improvements in Pakistan's labor laws to counter forced labor and child labor, in addition to its laws and enforcement to counter trafficking in persons. We were able to achieve incremental improvements in these areas, making a difference in the lives of those most affected.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Djibouti? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. The most pressing human rights issues in Djibouti are the suppression of opposition political voices; the refusal to allow some groups to form legally recognized political parties; the harassment, abuse, and detention of some government critics; the Government's denial of access to independent sources of information; and restrictions on freedoms of speech and assembly. A stable Djibouti is essential to the goal of ensuring unimpeded access for U.S. forces. Improved government institutions and economic gains are important to maintaining that stability; both of which require enhanced rule of law. The United States is committed to maintaining this long-term strategic partnership to counter regional terrorism and thus assure our enhanced security here at home.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Djibouti? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. If confirmed, I will use my leadership and voice to underscore that respect for democratic rights is essential for Djibouti's future growth, prosperity, and security. I will engage Djiboutian authorities, international partners, civil society organizations, and business leaders to work together toward these goals. The United

States and Djibouti have a long and rich history of partnership; if confirmed, I look forward to further developing and deepening relationships with the Djiboutian Government, international and domestic partners and the people of Djibouti to ensure the tangible advancement of human rights, civil society, and democracy, and mutual prosperity. Bringing together multiple stakeholders, including Djiboutian Government officials, international partners, civil society, and business leaders, will likely be one of the most important steps and challenges.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. To promote better governance, our embassy works with civil society organizations to build operational capacity and to increase the participation of Djiboutians in public service delivery. We also support programs to promote women's empowerment and press freedom by building the capacity of Djiboutian journalists. If confirmed, I will continue this important work.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Djibouti? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. Human rights, civil society organizations, and other non-governmental organizations, regardless of where they are registered or operate, all play an important role in advancing democratic governance, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and assisting Djibouti to develop its democratic institutions. If confirmed, I am committed to meeting with any individual or entity that can be beneficial to U.S. goals.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

Answer. If confirmed, under my leadership the U.S. Embassy will continue to engage with representatives from across the political spectrum, including the ruling party and opposition parties.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Djibouti on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Djibouti?

Answer. The United States supports media freedom and is committed to strengthening journalistic professionalism. If confirmed, I will engage with like-minded missions, civil society, and international partners to underscore the importance of an independent, professional, and open media to a free and democratic society. I will press for the United States to continue its support to Djibouti's media and to encourage more independent media voices. Djiboutian journalists have participated in U.S. Government-sponsored professional exchange programs on reporting, safeguarding freedom of expression, and the media's role in strengthening democratic institutions.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in Djibouti?

Answer. The United States supports media freedom and is committed to strengthening journalistic professionalism. If confirmed, I will engage with like-minded missions, civil society, and international partners to underscore the importance of a credible, independent, professional media to a free and democratic society.

Question. Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Djibouti on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue our embassy's efforts to promote labor rights. As the embassy noted in our 2019 Human Rights Report, the Djiboutian Government did not consistently enforce the law protecting collective bargaining. I would advocate for continued improvements in this area, and document progress in the Human Rights Report.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Djibouti, no matter their sexual orienta-

tion or gender identity? What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Djibouti? What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Djibouti?

Answer. The United States continues to support upholding human rights and the dignity of all individuals in Djibouti, no matter their sexual orientation. I am committed to promoting human rights for all in Djibouti, including members of the LGBTQ community.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO JONATHAN PRATT BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. What are your most meaningful achievements to date in your career to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. My most meaningful achievements include helping reach a peace agreement in 2002 in the Democratic Republic of Congo during my first assignment in the Foreign Service and helping implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement from 2007–2009 in Sudan. These peace agreements meant that villages in both countries that had previously changed hands multiple times during conflict, exposing these populations to repeated rape and other violence, could begin the long process of rebuilding and healing. The end to both wars also allowed elections to move forward in these countries at national and local levels. Later in my career, in Pakistan, I helped organize U.S. observation efforts of two successful elections, in a country previously ruled by military dictators. I also advocated regularly for the release of people falsely accused of blasphemy, as well as for reform of the blasphemy laws, and for improvements in Pakistan's labor laws to counter forced labor and child labor, in addition to its laws and enforcement to counter trafficking in persons. We were able to achieve incremental improvements in these areas, making a difference in the lives of those most affected.

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues in Djibouti? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Djibouti? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. The most pressing human rights issues in Djibouti are the suppression of opposition political voices; the refusal to allow some groups to form legally recognized political parties; the harassment, abuse, and detention of some government critics; extrajudicial arrests of independent journalists; the Government's suppression of investigative journalism; and restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. I will continue our embassy's advocacy for the strengthening of democratic institutions and the adoption of democratic practices as the best guarantors of long-term peace, prosperity, and stability. The embassy, through USAID and implementing partners, works to strengthen the capabilities and organizing power of civil society groups so that they can work with government agencies to improve service delivery.

Question. If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Djibouti in advancing human rights, civil society, and democracy in general?

Answer. Potential obstacles to addressing human rights and democracy in Djibouti include a nascent civil society, lack of viable opposition parties, a weak judicial sector, and traditions of personalized power rather than rule of law. The lack of strong opposition voices and independent media will also certainly present challenges. If confirmed, I look forward to working with our embassy, interagency colleagues, and international partners to overcome these challenges.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Djibouti? If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

Answer. Human rights, civil society organizations, and other non-governmental organizations, regardless of where they are registered or operate, all play an important role in advancing democratic governance, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and assisting Djibouti to develop into a 21st century partner of the United States. If confirmed, I am committed to meeting with any individual or

entity that can advance U.S. goals related to human rights, and to working to ensure that security forces do not receive U.S. assistance if there is credible information that they have committed a gross violation of human rights.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Djibouti to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by Djibouti?

Answer. I am fully committed to engaging with the Government of Djibouti on guaranteeing political freedoms. As it does in all cases, the Department of State urges governments to ensure that all defendants are afforded fair trial guarantees for any crimes for which they have been charged.

Question. Will you engage with Djibouti on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

Answer. Advancement of democracy and human rights in Djibouti is a key component of our bilateral relationship. We assess that improved democratization in Djibouti will support its internal stability and also assure the long-term viability of our bilateral relationship and of our military base.

To this end, our embassy and high-level U.S. Government officials regularly raise democracy and good governance concerns with Djiboutian officials, including detailed discussions about electoral reforms advocated by the African Union and public urging of strengthening rule of law. Our embassy leadership and staff also maintain dialogue with the opposition and civil society to ensure that we remain in contact with all representative elements of Djiboutian society. Our embassy leadership has specifically engaged the Djiboutian Government on the arrests of human rights activists as well as opposition members, a concerning issue which we will continue to raise in the future. If confirmed, I am fully committed to continuing this important work.

Question. Research from private industry demonstrates that, when managed well, diversity makes business teams better both in terms of creativity and in terms of productivity. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups?

Answer. As I have done in the past, I plan to recruit a highly diverse team and I plan to mentor and support all of the people on my team. Throughout my career I have put a particular emphasis on encouraging employees from diverse backgrounds to remain in the Foreign Service and in the Civil Service, part of which means supporting them to find the best possible onward assignments that will make them competitive for promotion and advancement. If confirmed, I plan to ensure that the entire embassy is focused on promoting and supporting diversity and that we have regular discussions on the tools we are using to achieve that goal. Our embassy also considers diversity in the Djiboutian context as concerns underrepresented groups within our Djiboutian workforce. The embassy has outreach programs to these groups to encourage applications from members of underrepresented groups.

Question. What steps will you take to ensure each of the supervisors at the Embassy in Djibouti are fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to speak with my team both collectively and individually about our objectives for recruiting a diverse team and for promoting an inclusive environment. I will ensure that all employees complete any required diversity-related training and will seek engagement by the Office of Civil Rights on diversity and inclusion training. I will ensure that all of my staff know that diversity and inclusion are top priorities of mine.

Question. Do you commit to bring to the committee's attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect may be influenced by any of the President's business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to inform the committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action in order to benefit any of the President's business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in Djibouti?

Answer. My investment portfolio includes diversified mutual funds, which may hold interests in companies with a presence overseas, but which are exempt from the conflict of interest laws. I am committed to following all applicable ethics laws and regulations and remaining vigilant with regard to my ethics obligations.

Question. How do you believe political corruption impacts democratic governance and the rule of law generally, and in Djibouti specifically?

Answer. In many countries, efforts to foster broad-based economic growth, improve the delivery of public services, and pursue effective development policies continue to be stymied by disparities in economic and political power and corruption. These dynamics undermine public confidence, participatory policy making and effective policy implementation and service delivery. Public corruption undercuts all democratic nations' governance and rule of law and can pose an existential threat to nascent or weak democracies.

Question. What is your assessment of corruption trends in Djibouti and efforts to address and reduce it by that government?

Answer. Corruption is a problem in Djibouti, and Djibouti ranks 126th out of 180 countries in the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index reported by Transparency International. If confirmed, under my Ambassadorship the United States will continue to advocate for a comprehensive, systemic approach to combat corruption that empowers the people and promotes inclusive democracy and economic growth in Djibouti. In recent years, some government ministers have been removed for corruption and some restitution of resources was apparently achieved, however political traditions prioritizing the distribution of patronage among various clans and identity groups too often protects both poor performing and corrupt government officials. The modest trend over the past 20 years has been toward greater competency and probity in government, but only consistent and objective application of the rule of law can cure this ill.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to strengthen good governance and anticorruption programming in Djibouti?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue the trend of our embassy and high-level U.S. Government officials regularly raising good governance concerns with Djiboutian officials. I will also continue our work with civil society organizations to build operational capacity and to increase the participation of Djiboutians in public service delivery. I will also support programs to combat gender-based violence, support women's empowerment, and promote investigative journalism.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO BARBERA HALE THORNHILL BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Oversight

Question. If confirmed, do you commit that under your leadership, the U.S. Embassy will not take any action to support, promote, or participate in any matters related to, or that could be perceived as benefitting, the Trump Organization?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to make clear to all employees that retaliation of any kind has no place in federal government and will not be tolerated under your leadership? Do you agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be held fully accountable, up to and including losing their job?

Answer. Yes, I commit to making clear that prohibited personnel practices has no place in the federal government and will not be tolerated. I agree that those found to have engaged in retaliation should be subject to accountability and discipline consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Department policy.

Question. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups in the Foreign Service? In the Civil Service?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently undertaking to ensure leaders under my direction are fostering a culture and environment of inclusion. I will promote habits and practices among the leadership that focus on inclusion as a key driver for hiring and retaining diverse talent. I will promote diversity and inclusion best practices and tips for inclusive hiring practices and standardized interview guidance. I will support the review of existing mentoring programs and how they can be bolstered.

Question. Do you commit to respond promptly to all requests for information by members of this committee?

Answer. Yes, with the understanding that any such response would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

Question. Do you commit to appear before this committee upon request?

Answer. Yes, with the understanding that any such appearance would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

Question. Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any credible allegations of foreign interference in U.S. elections?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any attempts by foreign or private individuals to improperly influence U.S. foreign policy, particularly if you have reason to believe those efforts are adverse to U.S. interests?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. If you become aware of any suspected waste, fraud, or abuse in the Department, do you commit to report it to the Inspector General or other appropriate channels?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules and to raise any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Democracy/Human Rights

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. I worked with Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity in Calcutta in 1994 in orphanages, supporting homebound families and helping the destitute and dying in the hospice "Home of the Pure Heart." I also worked extensively with Scouts BSA, formerly known as the Boy Scouts of America, an organization that has provided leadership and mentoring to more than 20,000 youths and underprivileged adolescents. I also helped the Children's Institute in Los Angeles to provide basic needs, early childhood education, and psychological counseling for more than 28,000 children who have been abused and have suffered many horrible traumas.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Singapore? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. Singapore is ranked as one of the least corrupt countries in the world and one of the most transparent in Asia. Our shared values of good governance, transparency, and respect for the rule of law continue to anchor our dynamic and growing cooperation. Nevertheless, Singapore believes curbs on certain human rights and fundamental freedoms—including freedom of association, freedom of expression, including for the members of the press, and the right to peaceful assembly—are necessary to maintain stability and social harmony in a small, multi-racial,

and multi-religious country. If confirmed, I am committed to engaging with civil society and the Singapore Government on the importance of human rights and fundamental freedoms to our shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Singapore? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. The United States and Singapore enjoy a deep partnership underpinned by our shared values of good governance, transparency, sovereignty, and respect for the rule of law. Nevertheless, Singapore believes curbs on certain human rights and fundamental freedoms—including freedom of association, freedom of expression, including for the members of the press, and the right to peaceful assembly—are necessary to maintain stability and social harmony in a small, multi-racial and multi-religious country. Domestic political and social issues are considered extremely sensitive topics in Singapore. To overcome this sensitivity, if confirmed, I am committed to building strong relationships that include open and frank discussion of the importance the United States places on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, across the globe, including in Singapore. If confirmed, I am committed to engaging with civil society and the Government, partners and allies, and other stakeholders to stress the importance of these human rights and fundamental freedoms to our shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. As a high-income country, Singapore generally does not receive assistance from the United States. The United States and Singapore enjoy a deep partnership underpinned by our shared values of good governance, transparency, sovereignty, and the rule of law. Singapore also is a primary contributor to Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) initiatives to close the development gaps among ASEAN members. If confirmed, I will use U.S. foreign assistance resources to work with Singapore to promote governance goals in the Southeast Asia region, as outlined in the Indo-Pacific Strategy, with human capital development undergirding our efforts.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Singapore? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. If confirmed, I will commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the United States, Singapore-based human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Singapore. If confirmed, I will also work with the Government to advocate for fair and transparent treatment of NGOs and civil society under the law.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

Answer. The United States urges equal treatment for all and underscores our commitment to diversity and inclusion. If confirmed, I will work with the Singaporean Government, including with opposition figures and parties, on these important issues and will promote access and inclusivity for women, members of minority groups, and youth within political parties.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Singapore on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Singapore?

Answer. The United States promotes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, across the globe, including in Singapore. Promoting these rights are key priorities of the Indo-Pacific Transparency Initiative. If confirmed, I am committed to engaging with civil society and the Government, as well as independent, local press in Singapore, on the importance of these human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in Singapore?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in Singapore.

Question. Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Singapore on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will work with the Singaporean Government, civil society, and other parts of the Singaporean economy on the issue of the right of labor groups to organize.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Singapore, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity? What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Singapore? What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Singapore?

Answer. Although Singapore is a relatively tolerant society, LGBTI persons face legal challenges that hinder full inclusion. The rights of LGBTI individuals and persons are a topic of importance in our conversations with the Singaporean Government. If confirmed, I will continue to urge equal treatment for all and to underscore our commitment to diversity and inclusion by engaging not only with the Singaporean Government, but also with civil society organizations, the private sector, and like-minded missions.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO BARBERA HALE THORNHILL BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Human Rights

Question. What are your most meaningful achievements to date in your career to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. I worked with Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity in Calcutta in 1994 in orphanages, supporting homebound families and helping the destitute and dying in the hospice “Home of the Pure Heart.” I also worked extensively with Scouts BSA, formerly known as the Boy Scouts of America, an organization that has provided leadership and mentoring to more than 20,000 youths and underprivileged adolescents. I also helped the Children’s Institute in Los Angeles to provide basic needs, early childhood education, and psychological counseling for more than 28,000 children who have been abused and have suffered many other horrible traumas.

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues in Singapore? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Singapore? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. Singapore believes curbs on certain human rights and fundamental freedoms—including freedom of association, freedom of expression, including for the members of the press, and the right of peaceful assembly—are necessary to maintain stability and social harmony in a small, multi-racial, and multi-religious country. The United States promotes respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms across the globe, including in Singapore. Promoting these rights, as well as media and internet freedom, is a key priority of the Indo-Pacific Transparency Initiative. If confirmed, I am committed to engaging with civil society and the Government on the importance of these human rights and fundamental freedoms to our shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Question. If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Singapore in advancing human rights, civil society, and democracy in general?

Answer. Domestic political and social issues are considered extremely sensitive topics in Singapore. To overcome this sensitivity, if confirmed, I am committed to building strong relationships that include open and frank discussion of the importance the United States places on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression. If confirmed, I will work with civil society,

the Government, partners and allies, and other stakeholders to advance human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Singapore? If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to engaging with human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in the United States and with local human rights NGOs in Singapore. Through such engagements, I will work to ensure that U.S. security cooperation activities with Singapore reinforce human rights. As a high-income country, Singapore generally does not receive assistance from the United States.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Singapore to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by Singapore?

Answer. Singapore has prided itself in strong respect for rule of law, and we will continue to work with the Government to stress values of human rights and fundamental freedoms. If confirmed, I am committed to engaging with Singapore to address cases of any key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted.

Question. Will you engage with Singapore on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to engaging with civil society and the Singaporean Government on the importance of human rights, civil rights, and good governance.

Question. Research from private industry demonstrates that, when managed well, diversity makes business teams better both in terms of creativity and in terms of productivity. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently undertaking to foster a culture of inclusion and build a representative workforce. I will encourage promoting diversity and inclusion in the hiring process through recruiting efforts and standardized interview procedures. I will promote the expansion of workplace flexibilities, including telework and alternative work schedules, and Leave Without Pay (LWOP) options, similar to “boomerang talent” programs in the private sector. I will learn from and listen to employees using mechanisms like the Open Conversations platform and the Department’s new Centralized Exit Survey.

Question. What steps will you take to ensure each of the supervisors at the Embassy in Singapore are fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently undertaking to ensure leaders under my direction are fostering a culture and environment of inclusion. I will promote habits and practices among the leadership that focus on inclusion as a key driver for hiring and retaining diverse talent. I will promote diversity and inclusion best practices and tips for inclusive hiring practices and standardized interview guidance. I will support the review of existing mentoring programs and with an eye on how they can be strengthened.

Conflicts of Interest

Question. Do you commit to bring to the committee’s attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect may be influenced by any of the President’s business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules and to raising any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to inform the committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action in order to benefit any of the President’s business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules and to raising any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in Singapore?

Answer. My investment portfolio includes a broad range of asset classes, some of which may hold interests in companies with a presence in Singapore. My investment portfolio also includes security interests, including stocks, in companies, some of which may have a presence in Singapore. I am committed to following all applicable ethics laws and regulations and remaining vigilant with regard to my ethics obligations.

Corruption

Question. How do you believe political corruption impacts democratic governance and the rule of law generally, and in Singapore specifically?

Answer. Corruption is toxic to democracy. The United States and Singapore enjoy a deep partnership underpinned by our shared values of good governance, transparency, sovereignty, and the rule of law. Singapore is consistently ranked as one of the least corrupt countries in the world and one of the most transparent countries in Asia. As one of our most reliable partners in the region, Singapore has worked with us to achieve the governance goals outlined under the Indo-Pacific Strategy, with human capital development undergirding our efforts.

Question. What is your assessment of corruption trends in Singapore and efforts to address and reduce it by that government?

Answer. Singapore is as one of the least corrupt countries in the world and one of the most transparent countries in Asia. Singapore prides itself on having a reputation for good governance and low corruption, which has helped attract thousands of U.S. companies and investors to do business there.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to strengthen good governance and anticorruption programming in Singapore?

Answer. Singapore is consistently ranked as one of the least corrupt countries in the world and one of the most transparent countries in Asia. Our shared values of stability, prosperity, and the rule of law continue to anchor our dynamic and growing cooperation. If confirmed, I am committed to engaging with civil society and the Singaporean Government to stress these shared values.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBMITTED TO THOMAS LASZLO VAJDA BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. If confirmed, do you commit that under your leadership, the U.S. Embassy will not take any action to support, promote, or participate in any matters related to, or that could be perceived as benefitting, the Trump Organization?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to make clear to all employees that retaliation of any kind has no place in federal government and will not be tolerated under your leadership? Do you agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be held fully accountable, up to and including losing their job?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to making clear that prohibited personnel practices has no place in the federal government and will not be tolerated. I agree that those found to have engaged in retaliation should be subject to accountability and discipline consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Department policy.

Question. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups in the Foreign Service? In the Civil Service?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently undertaking to ensure leaders under my direction are fostering a culture and environment of respect for diversity and inclusion. I will promote habits and practices that focus on inclusion as a key driver for retaining diverse talent. I commit to promoting diversity and inclusion best practices for inclusive hiring practices and standardized interview guidance, and to supporting the review of existing mentoring programs to see how they can be strengthened.

More broadly, I commit to working and mentoring the talented and diverse members of the Foreign Service and Civil Service with whom I work to deepen the Department's ongoing diversity and inclusion efforts.

Question. Do you commit to respond promptly to all requests for information by members of this committee?

Answer. Yes, with the understanding that any such response would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

Question. Do you commit to appear before this committee upon request?

Answer. Yes, with the understanding that any such appearance would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

Question. Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any credible allegations of foreign interference in U.S. elections?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raise concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any attempts by foreign or private individuals to improperly influence U.S. foreign policy, particularly if you have reason to believe those efforts are adverse to U.S. interests?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. If you become aware of any suspected waste, fraud, or abuse in the Department, do you commit to report it to the Inspector General or other appropriate channels?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to comply with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. I served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Rangoon from 2008 to 2011 and worked with Embassy colleagues to support the early stages of the opening that led to Burma's first credible national election in a half century in 2015. My colleagues and I made it a priority to meet with and support those in Burma who were striving, often at great personal risk, to bring democracy to the country. While this transition is far from complete, I am proud of the work the United States has done to support the people of Burma in their struggle for peace and prosperity.

In addition, as then-Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, I visited Cox's Bazar in 2017 to see the humanitarian crisis firsthand and shine a light on the horrific atrocities against Rohingya. I have worked with my colleagues in the Department to meet the humanitarian needs of Rohingya, push for accountability for those responsible for abuses, and address the underlying drivers of the crisis. While we have more to do, this work represents the highest calling of any diplomat.

I also served as the Director of the Middle East Partnership Initiative during the Arab Spring and worked with colleagues to target U.S. assistance to support civil society groups and activists working to advance human rights, political and economic reform, and women's empowerment throughout the Middle East and North Africa. At that time and since, the region has continued to face challenges, but I am proud of the efforts my colleagues and I undertook to provide support to those advocating for a more democratic and equitable future.

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Burma? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. The United States has partnered with the people of Burma for decades to strengthen democracy, expand civilian control of the military, responsibly develop the economy, resolve disputes, control illicit narcotics, fight trafficking in persons, combat corruption, promote human rights, and address the root causes of violence

and abuse in Rakhine State and elsewhere. Burma's historic 2015 election was rightfully seen as a milestone, but we have seen since that Burma cannot unwind decades of internal strife and military rule overnight. Three of the main challenges to Burma's transition are the lack of civilian control over the military, the political marginalization of members of ethnic and religious minority groups, and the weakness of institutions.

The military remains a significant impediment to further democratic growth, as shown by its veto this January over of any constitutional reform, and a focus of mine as Ambassador, if confirmed, will be to continue to push the military to undertake reforms and accept civilian control. More broadly, promoting ethnic and national reconciliation and building an inclusive civic identity are crucial for Burma to constructively address its legacy of violence and repression, and to ensure that all its people can participate fully in the democratic transition.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Burma? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. The United States must maintain its policy of engagement with Burma to move the country in the direction of democratic civilian rule. If confirmed, I will work to support those elements of civil society, business, and government that seek reform and bolster institutions that promote democracy, good governance, rule of law, free markets, and respect for human rights, including religious freedom.

That includes strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations, political parties, women and youth activists, and ethnic groups to more effectively engage in the democratic process; empowering public servants to be responsive to their constituents; and encouraging responsible investment and businesses practices to shrink the space for corruption. Empowering Burma's democratic institutions, and reducing the role of the military in politics are key to addressing underlying challenges following five decades of authoritarian rule. Progress is also connected to the country's economic transformation—broadening economic participation and decreasing corruption and the military's role in the economy. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues to expand opportunities for the next generation of leaders to continue reforms.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with colleagues to utilize U.S. assistance to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations, independent media, political parties, and ethnic groups to more effectively engage in the democratic process. We must also work to further strengthen the democratic institutions, empower public servants to be responsive to their constituents, encourage responsible investment and business practices to shrink the space for corruption, and expand opportunities for the next generation of leaders to continue needed reforms.

In addition, in the context of the upcoming election, if confirmed, I will work with my colleagues to continue to build capacity within Burma's election commission, train political parties and civil society organizations, counter hate speech and disinformation, strengthen election security, and educate the electorate on democratic principles, including five million first-time voters. In addition, if confirmed, I will continue work to strengthen the capacity of the criminal justice system to effectively counter transnational criminal organizations that undermine economic development, threaten democratic institutions, and aggravate violence.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Burma? What steps will you take to pro-actively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to meet with civil society members, human rights organizations, and other non-governmental organizations in the United States and Burma, as I did as Deputy Chief of Mission in Rangoon and in accordance with our long history of support to such groups. We must absolutely continue to strongly support those elements of civil society that seek reform and to bolster institutions that promote democracy, good governance, rule of law, free markets, and respect for human rights.

If confirmed, I will continue to raise the United States' concerns over the continued use of new and old laws to crack down on freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, religion and belief, and association. In addition, if confirmed, I will continue

and deepen our support to civil society organizations working to repeal, amend, or decriminalize these repressive laws.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities and youth within political parties?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to meet with the full range of political leaders and parties, as I did as Deputy Chief of Mission in Rangoon and in accordance with our long history of support for democratic transition and politically and socially marginalized groups.

If confirmed, I will continue our longstanding efforts to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations, political parties, and ethnic and religious groups to more effectively engage in the democratic process, including assistance and programs that promote access and inclusivity for women, minorities, and youth.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Burma on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Burma?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will work with my team to actively promote freedom of the press, and I will meet with independent, local press in Burma. If confirmed, I will continue to raise the United States' concerns over the use of old and new laws to crack down on freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, religion and belief, and association, including cases of journalists prosecuted for performing their jobs. In addition, if confirmed, I will continue and deepen our support to civil society organizations working to repeal, amend, or decriminalize these repressive laws.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in Burma?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will work with my team to support the people of Burma in their efforts to consolidate and deepen democratic reforms, including efforts to counter disinformation and propaganda. This is particularly important in the context of Burma's upcoming election. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues to continue to build capacity within Burma's election commission, train political parties and civil society organizations, counter hate speech and dis- and misinformation, strengthen election security, and educate the electorate on democratic principles. This effort includes ongoing engagement with Facebook, the dominant social media platform in Burma.

Question. Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Burma on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I will work with my team to promote the rights of workers in Burma. The United States has long promoted internationally recognized labor rights with a particular focus on freedom of association and collective bargaining, and strengthening core labor standards for members of traditionally neglected groups, such as women, youth, and informal sector workers. If confirmed, I will work closely with Congress and interagency partners to support protections for labor rights in Burma.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Burma, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity? What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Burma? What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Burma?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support the efforts of the Department to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Burma, no matter their sexual orientation. If confirmed, I will support U.S. policy efforts that seek to protect the human rights of, and respect for, all Burmese people, including LGBTQ people. I would also seek to maintain a dialogue with LGBTI activists, and support accurate and timely reporting on LGBTI rights issues.

Question. Since Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was elected in December, he has placed individuals implicated in war crimes in senior government posts; withdrawn from the U.N. resolution on investigating war crimes; and increased persecution of members of civil society, journalists, and families of the civil war disappeared. Despite this, the State Department is apparently still debating whether to certify that the Sri Lankan Government is "taking effective and consistent steps" to meet the accountability and reconciliation certification criteria laid out in the

FY20 appropriation law. No objective observer could claim the Government of Sri Lanka meets the certification criteria. Please provide a status update on your certification deliberations.

Answer. The Department shares concerns regarding Sri Lanka, closely monitors developments in the country, and continues to press the Government of Sri Lanka to uphold its obligations and commitments related to human rights, accountability, and reconciliation. The Department has repeatedly stressed to the Government of Sri Lanka at the highest levels that the character of our relationship will depend on the Government upholding its human rights obligations and commitments, and that further actions to allow those credibly accused of human rights violations and abuses without accountability will be detrimental to our relationship. The Department is taking into account all available information in order to make an informed decision regarding the certification requirement in the FY2020 appropriations act.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO THOMAS LASZLO VAJDA BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Question. Aung San Suu Kyi's government and the Tatmadaw have been accused of using Burma's oppressive laws to curtail the freedom of assembly and freedom of press. In addition, the Suu Kyi government has not used its supermajority in the Union Parliament to amend or repeal some of the more oppressive laws, and in some cases, has passed laws that critics claim further erode respect for human rights in Burma.

- In your view, are the Tatmadaw guilty of war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide?

Answer. The United States has repeatedly expressed its deep concern about the Burmese military's appalling abuses against members of ethnic and religious minority groups, including horrific atrocities against Rohingya in 2017. The Department of State concluded in November 2017 that the atrocities against Rohingya constituted ethnic cleansing. We have taken strong actions to promote accountability for these atrocities, including by sanctioning top military leaders for their role in serious human rights abuse.

Historically, determinations that certain acts may amount to genocide or crimes against humanity are made in the Executive Branch by the Secretary of State, who has expressed his outrage at these horrible abuses and stated he is focusing on pursuing policies that will promote accountability and change behavior. If confirmed, I will continue to assess all available information and make recommendations on how best to promote justice and accountability for atrocities and other human rights violations and abuses in Burma.

Question. Should the U.S. Government sanction more senior Burmese security officers and government officials for their role in serious human rights violations? Would you support additional restrictions on U.S. relations with businesses and companies owned or controlled by the Tatmadaw and its senior officers?

Answer. The United States continues to prioritize accountability for those responsible for serious human rights abuses and justice for victims as part of efforts to promote and defend human rights. The United States designated the Burmese military's Commander-in-Chief (CINC), deputy CINC, and seven other senior officers and two units under the Global Magnitsky sanctions program; designated the Commander-in-Chief, deputy, and four other senior Burmese officers for their role in gross violations of human rights under Section 7031(c) of the State Appropriations Act; and has strongly supported U.N. investigation mechanisms. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues to consider all policy tools at our disposal to promote accountability, including additional sanctions, as appropriate.

In addition, if confirmed, I will support ongoing efforts to promote responsible trade and investment, which limit the influence of the Burmese military's economic interests, shrink the operating space for military-owned or operated businesses, and support economic reforms.

Question. Are there avenues for the United States to work with partners in nations outside Burma—in ASEAN or among Burma's neighbors in South Asia—to pursue goals of human rights and democracy in the country?

Answer. The United States has been working closely with our allies and partners across the globe to promote and strengthen human rights and democracy in Burma. The close relationship between the United States and ASEAN has advanced on the foundation of shared values, including openness, transparency, inclusiveness, and

respect for sovereignty and the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific. ASEAN remains at the heart of our vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

If confirmed, I will continue to work with my colleagues to generate additional support from international partners and countries in the region for human rights and reform efforts inside Burma. The Department regularly engages ASEAN countries and our key partners in South Asia in efforts to push Burma to create conditions conducive to the safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees and those internally displaced. The Department is also working with many governments in the region to underscore their commitments to the 2016 Bali Declaration and their international legal obligations, including the provision of support, humanitarian assistance, and disembarkation to Rohingya and other displaced persons stranded at sea. The Rakhine State crisis demands a regional and global response, and if confirmed, I will continue such efforts.

Question. What is your view of The Gambia's pending International Court of Justice case against Burma and the International Criminal Court investigation?

Answer. The United States continues to be a leader in promoting accountability and behavior change, including through our support to multilateral accountability efforts. We have encouraged all parties to participate fully in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) proceedings and to respect the ICJ's provisional measures order. If confirmed, I will continue to call on Burma to respect the ICJ's order and to urge Burma to use these developments to pursue justice and greater respect for human rights.

The United States is working with our allies and partners to explore a range of options to promote justice for victims and accountability for abuses. Preventing the recurrence of atrocities, addressing the needs of victims as well as including their voice and agency in discussions, and ensuring those responsible are held accountable are all essential to resolving the Rakhine State crisis and to furthering Burma's transition toward becoming a democratic, peaceful, and prosperous state. Secretary Pompeo has been clear about U.S. views toward the International Criminal Court.

Question. What are your most meaningful achievements to date in your career to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. I served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Rangoon from 2008 to 2011 and worked with Embassy colleagues to support the early stages of the opening that led to Burma's first credible national election in a half century in 2015. My colleagues and I made it a priority to meet with and support those in Burma who were striving, often at great personal risk, to bring true democracy to the country. While this transition is far from complete, I am proud of the work the United States has done to support the people of Burma in their struggle for peace and prosperity.

In addition, as then-Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, I visited Cox's Bazar in 2017 to see the humanitarian crisis firsthand and shine a light on the horrific atrocities against Rohingya. I have worked with my colleagues in the Department to meet the humanitarian needs of Rohingya, push for accountability for those responsible for abuses, and address the underlying drivers of the crisis. While we have more to do, this work represents the highest calling of any diplomat.

I also served as the Director of the Middle East Partnership Initiative during the Arab Spring and worked with colleagues to target U.S. assistance to support civil society groups and activists working to advance human rights, political and economic reform, and women's empowerment throughout the Middle East and North Africa. At that time and since, the region has continued to face challenges, but I am proud of the efforts my colleagues and I undertook to provide support to those advocating for a more democratic and equitable future.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Burma?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to meet with civil society members, human rights organizations, women and youth activists, and other non-governmental organizations in the United States and Burma, as I did as Deputy Chief of Mission in Rangoon and in accordance with our long history of support to such groups. We must absolutely continue to strongly support those elements of civil society that seek reform and bolster institutions that promote democracy, good governance, rule of law, free markets, women's empowerment, and respect for human rights.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights in Burma?

Answer. Reforming the Burmese military, ending its decades of impunity, and placing it under the control of the civilian government are essential for the long-term success of democracy and prosperity in Burma. Leahy Law restrictions are important tools to assist in this effort.

Congress currently prohibits the sale of military equipment and military assistance to Burma. Under the JADE Act, the United States is required to restrict visas for Burmese military leaders and their immediate family members. In addition, Leahy Law restrictions prohibit assistance to security force units credibly implicated in a gross violation of human rights until the Government of Burma is determined to have taken effective steps to bring the responsible security force unit members to justice. I am committed to fully support these laws and restrictions.

I understand there is an interagency process for reviewing certain engagements with the Burmese military to ensure that any such activity complies with all applicable legal restrictions and meets our strategic objectives with regard to promoting human rights. If confirmed, I will ensure we continue to apply stringent interagency review to military engagements.

Question. The escalating conflict between the Arakan Army and the Tatmadaw in Chin and Rakhine States poses several problems, including new allegations of war crimes, the internal displacement of over 160,000 people, and further complications to the possible dignified, voluntary, safe, and sustainable return of the Rohingya refugees currently in Bangladesh. The United States has been a major supporter of Aung San Suu Kyi's peace process, including providing funding for her Panglong Peace Conferences and her National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NRPC).

According to some observers, that peace process is hopelessly stalled.

- What role, if any, do you see for the U.S. embassy in Burma to help address the civil war in western Burma, as well as in eastern Burma?

Answer. Promoting ethnic and national reconciliation, as well as building an inclusive civic identity, is crucial for Burma to credibly address its legacy of civil war and repression. This is true not only in Rakhine State but throughout areas in Burma affected by violence. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues to continue to engage ethnic and religious groups and local communities and to empower civil society organizations working to improve their communities and better engage their government. Our assistance programs—from health to economic growth—are critical to our engagement with these communities and support efforts to pursue peace. There is also a role for public advocacy, as when the U.S. Embassy joined other local missions in June in calling for restraint ahead of a military offensive in Rakhine State.

Ultimately, progress depends on the people, government, military, and armed groups of Burma, but if confirmed, I will continue to prioritize ways to support efforts towards peace, justice, and reconciliation.

Question. As Ambassador, would you support the continuation of U.S. assistance to Aung San Suu Kyi's peace process and the NRPC? Would you consider pursuing alternative paths to peace, as China has done?

Answer. Progress toward a nationwide ceasefire agreement has stagnated. If confirmed, I will support the continuation of U.S. assistance to the peace process and efforts to end violence and abuse, including through assistance on ceasefire negotiations and monitoring, political dialogue, addressing violence, promoting respect for the human rights of all ethnic minority communities and humanitarian aid. If confirmed, I will lead my colleagues at U.S. Embassy Rangoon in continuing to evaluate the nature of our support and look for the most effective ways to encourage peace and reconciliation and move positively beyond the status quo.

Progress depends on the people, government, military, and armed groups of Burma. If confirmed, I will continue to prioritize ways to support efforts towards peace, justice, and reconciliation. The Government of the People's Republic of China maintains significant influence with a number of Burma's ethnic armed groups. Constructive, good-faith engagement by governments in the region would be a positive step toward sustainable peace, but we cannot ignore PRC actions that have worsened this violence and prolonged instability. If confirmed, I will continue efforts to act as a friend to the people of Burma and a partner of those genuinely interested in building peace.

Question. Do you see a possible path for getting the Tatmadaw and all the armed ethnic groups to agree to an unconditional ceasefire to address the COVID-19 pandemic? Are you concerned that the COVID-19 pandemic could be used as justification for additional and prolonged restrictions on fundamental human rights?

Answer. Sporadic ceasefires between the Burmese military and ethnic armed groups (EAGs) in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic have not held. Violence in Rakhine State and Chin State, in particular, has escalated in recent months, killing dozens of members of local communities and displacing thousands. The United States continues to call on all sides to cease fighting, protect local communities, and pursue dialogue. If confirmed, I would work to redouble these efforts, as well as efforts to call on Burma to lift ongoing access restrictions that are preventing the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance and to remove a prolonged internet blackout, which cuts communities off from vital information during the pandemic.

I understand Embassy Rangoon and others have seen public health restrictions related to COVID-19 applied unequally, with harsher penalties falling disproportionately on religious minorities. There have also been complaints from workers' organizations that regulations affected their ability to protest in connection with labor strikes. Given the broad use of defamation and other laws to restrict freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, if confirmed, I will closely monitor the situation and address any possible effort to use COVID-19 restrictions for political, rather than legitimate public health, ends.

Question. In March 2020, the Tatmadaw blocked the passage of constitutional amendments proposed by the National League for Democracy in Burma's Union Parliament. Several of the ethnic groups have stated that they do not recognize the legitimacy of the 2008 constitution, and insist that a new constitution be drafted as a condition for peace:

- Do you think there is a viable means to amending the 2008 constitution that could constitute a step forward in ending Burma's civil war?

Answer. I was disappointed to see the Burmese military effectively veto efforts to amend the 2008 constitution in January. Such efforts are crucial to making Burma's constitution more democratic, strengthening Burma's democratic institutions, and reducing the role of military in politics.

At the same time, there are many actions the civilian government can take to better include ethnic groups in the process of democratic reform, rebuild government bodies responsible for ceasefire monitoring and political negotiations, and acknowledge legitimate ethnic minority group grievances. If confirmed, I will continue to engage ethnic groups and local communities to help them better engage their government and to support long-term efforts to pursue peace.

Question. How do you believe political corruption impacts democratic governance and the rule of law generally, and in Burma specifically?

Answer. Political corruption hollows out democratic institutions, weakens the rule of law, and undermines public confidence in elected officials and the benefits of democratic governance. In Burma, the military or military-backed governments employed wide-scale repression and misrule for decades that left Burma with weak institutions, an underdeveloped economy, and a pervasive lack of trust in government entities. This misrule also contributed to legitimate political grievances by ethnic and religious minority groups, which fuel civic strife to this day.

Question. What is your assessment of corruption trends in Burma and efforts to address and reduce it by that government?

Answer. The current civilian government has made important progress in consolidating some reforms, fighting corruption, and opening Burma's economy. This includes work by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and related legislation that have expanded government efforts to identify, investigate, and prosecute public corruption.

While the ACC has successfully prosecuted some senior officials in Burma, these efforts represent one part of broader reforms that the people of Burma have long sought. More work remains to be done, including with regard to removing the military from politics and the economy and promoting international trade and investment best practices. In addition, we must continue to empower government leaders and civil society to push back on businesses and entities that exploit Burma's natural resources and human capital while providing little benefit to local communities.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to strengthen good governance and anticorruption programming in Burma?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to support those elements of civil society, business, and government that seek reform and bolster institutions that promote democracy, good governance, rule of law, free markets, and respect for human rights.

That includes strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations, political parties, and ethnic groups to more effectively engage in the democratic process and

advance government accountability and transparency; empowering public servants to be responsive to their constituents and building their capacity to effectively investigate and prosecute corruption; encouraging responsible investment and businesses practices to shrink the space for corruption; and expanding opportunities for the next generation of leaders to continue needed reforms.

Question. Research from private industry demonstrates that, when managed well, diversity makes business teams better both in terms of creativity and in terms of productivity. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently undertaking to foster a culture of inclusion and a diverse and representative workforce. I will encourage promoting diversity and inclusion in the hiring process through standardized interview procedures. I will also learn from and listen to employees using mechanisms like the Open Conversations platform and the Department's new Centralized Exit Survey.

As the Senior Advisor in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA), I have mandated similar policies and also supported and engaged with the Bureau's Diversity Working Group; created a new Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator for the Bureau; served as the liaison to the South Asian American Employee Association, one of the Department's Employee Affinity Groups; and undertaken outreach to other Department affinity groups to support greater diversity in SCA's recruitment and hiring. I will draw on these experiences to promote diversity and inclusion in Embassy Rangoon, if I am confirmed.

In addition, I understand Embassy Rangoon launched an Inclusion Strategy in August 2019 to build acceptance for full inclusion for colleagues of all backgrounds, including religions, ethnicities, disabilities, genders, and sexual orientations. Discrimination, especially that based on ethnicity, is a fundamental problem in Burma where it has fueled violence. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting this initiative.

Question. What steps will you take to ensure each of the supervisors at the Embassy in Burma are fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive?

Answer. If confirmed, it is my responsibility as Ambassador to create a culture of leadership that fosters an environment that is diverse and inclusive. Managers, I included, share the responsibility to articulate clearly our team's mission and how diversity and inclusion contribute to our goals. I will encourage individual growth, value and respect unique perspectives, enhance professional development, and strive to inspire all employees. If confirmed, I will also enable and encourage the good work of U.S. Embassy Rangoon's Inclusion Leadership Team, which brings together local staff from diverse backgrounds, as well as American supervisors, to institutionalize principles of inclusion across the mission.

I commit to promoting diversity and inclusion best practices for inclusive hiring practices and standardized interview guidance, and to supporting the review of existing mentoring programs to see how they can be strengthened.

Question. Do you commit to bring to the committee's attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect may be influenced by any of the President's business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to inform the committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action in order to benefit any of the President's business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in Burma?

Answer. My investment portfolio includes a broad range of asset classes, some of which may hold interests in companies with a presence in Burma. My investment portfolio also includes security interests, including stocks, in companies, some of which may have a presence in Burma. I am committed to following all applicable

ethics laws and regulations and remaining vigilant with regard to my ethics obligations.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO THOMAS LASZLO VAJDA BY SENATOR EDWARD J. MARKEY

Question. How will you press the Burmese Government to abide by the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in January 2020, including to prevent genocide and to preserve evidence of atrocities? Further, will you work to ensure Burmese authorities meet periodic reporting requirements on measures taken to implement this order?

Answer. The United States continues to be a leader in promoting accountability for human rights abuses in Burma and incentivizing behavior change to ensure such abuses do not happen again, including through our support to multilateral accountability efforts. We have encouraged all parties to participate fully in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) proceedings and to respect the ICJ's provisional measures order. If confirmed, I will continue to call on the Burmese Government and military to respect the ICJ's order and urge Burma to pursue justice and greater respect for human rights.

Preventing atrocities, addressing the needs of victims and ensuring they have a voice and agency in these efforts, and promoting accountability for those responsible for atrocities are essential to addressing the root causes of the Rakhine State crisis and to furthering Burma's transition to a democratic, peaceful, and prosperous state.

Question. Over the past months the Government of Burma has increased attacks and human rights violations in Rakhine and Chin states. Reports of abuses include burning villages, killing civilians, torture, forced displacement, and civilian detention and disappearance, which the former U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar said could amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. Many of these same unlawful acts were committed in 2017 against Rohingya communities, which forced hundreds of thousands of people to seek safety in Bangladesh. What would be the most effective U.S. response and what are the lessons learned from how the U.S. handled the situation in 2017 that should inform how it addresses this latest spike in violence?

Answer. The Burmese military has a clear history of committing abuses across Burma, including in recent months in Rakhine and Chin States. The Department has publicly expressed deep concern about the escalating violence in Rakhine State and southern Chin State, where members of local communities have been killed and thousands have been displaced in recent months.

Embassy Rangoon joined other diplomatic missions in Burma in a statement pushing for a cessation of violence, peaceful dialogue, renewed efforts to protect communities, and access for humanitarian organizations. The Department has also underscored Burma's obligations under international law and the need for Burma to implement the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) provisional measures. If confirmed, I will use all the tools at my disposal to urge a cessation of violence in Rakhine and Chin States, justice and accountability for abuses, and unhindered humanitarian access, including through ongoing coordination with regional partners.

Question. Exacerbating the conflict in Chin and Rakhine States, the Burmese Government has instituted an internet blackout in as many as nine townships at various times since June 2019, impacting approximately 1 million civilians. As a further complication, the internet blackout carries a deadly weight during the pandemic. The Tatmadaw has recently defended these restrictions as a means to tamp down on the Rakhine-Bamar conflict and prevent the sharing of military-related information. While internet access restrictions were recently lifted in one townships (Maungdaw), violence has increased markedly since the restrictions were imposed. What will you do to raise concerns about increasing violence and rights restrictions like internet access?

Answer. The Department has publicly expressed deep concern about escalating violence in Rakhine State and southern Chin State, and called on all sides to cease fighting, protect local communities, and pursue dialogue. We have also called on Burma to lift ongoing access restrictions that are preventing the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance. Specifically, we have called on the Burmese Government—in public comments and in private settings—to end the prolonged internet blackout, which cuts off communities from vital information during the pandemic.

If confirmed, I will use all the tools at my disposal to continue calling for the restoration of full mobile data access in Rakhine and Chin States.

Question. In addition to the Rohingya, other ethnic minorities that live in Kachin and the northern Shan State, as well as the Karen people, are also victims of the Burmese military's brutality. If confirmed, how will you leverage your position as Ambassador to advance a broad, inclusive, and participatory peace process between the Government of Burma, the Tatmadaw, and ethnic armed organizations?

Answer. Promoting ethnic and national reconciliation, and building an inclusive civic identity, is crucial for Burma to constructively address its legacy of civil war and civic strife. A broad range of community voices, including those of victims of abuse, need to be part of any sustainable peace process. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues to continue this engagement with all of Burma's ethnic and religious groups, including through strong support from Congress, to empower civil society organizations working to improve their communities; promote democracy, justice, and rule of law; and address the needs of victims of abuse. Our assistance programs—from health to economic growth—are critical to our engagement with these communities and support efforts to pursue peace.

If confirmed, I will also support the continuation of U.S. assistance to community-strengthening efforts and other intercommunal peace-building programs. If confirmed, I will also call on civilian and military officials to build an inclusive, rights-respecting, democratic society and to ensure that Burma's democratic advancement provides dividends to all its people.

Question. A blanket ban on humanitarian access remains in place across large parts of northern and central Rakhine State, as well as southern Chin State, where some of the most vulnerable communities in Burma are currently being denied life-saving assistance. What is your view on this policy of the Burmese Government, and what role should the U.S. and the wider diplomatic community in Burma play to address this situation?

Answer. The United States continues to push for the removal of restrictions on the delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance and that unduly limit freedom of movement in Rakhine and Chin States, as well as other regions affected by violence. The situation overall remains unacceptable, although I understand there have been some small positive steps, including the delivery of World Food Program food aid to Chin State's Paletwa Township in early May and again in mid-July, the first such deliveries this year.

Embassy Rangoon joined other diplomatic missions in Burma in a statement pushing for a cessation of fighting in the region, peaceful dialogue, renewed efforts to protect local communities, and access for humanitarian organizations. If confirmed, I will continue to work with likeminded countries, regional partners, and the U.N. to use all the tools at our disposal to push for humanitarian access to vulnerable communities.

Question. There are significant concerns that the ongoing conflict in Rakhine and Chin States could be used to justify the closing of polling locations and undermine the ability for the populations of those States, including those displaced by conflict, to exercise their right to vote. Historically, Burma has used ongoing conflict as a justification to disenfranchise minority groups. What steps should the U.S. take to ensure the forthcoming elections will be free and fair, including ensuring that populations in conflict-affected areas will be able to participate in the political process? What steps can/should the U.S. take to ensure that the Rohingya in Burma and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh will be able to vote? More broadly, what benchmarks will the U.S. use to determine if the elections are free and fair?

Answer. With robust support from Congress, the United States is working to promote free and fair elections in Burma as part of ongoing efforts to consolidate democratic reforms. U.S. support builds capacity within Burma's election commission, trains political parties and civil society organizations, counters hate speech and disinformation, strengthens election security, and educates the electorate on democratic principles. The key benchmark in any election is the estimation that the results of the election broadly reflect the will of the people.

Concerns over potential poll closures are well-founded. An estimated 500,000 people were disenfranchised in the 2015 election due to poll closures in Shan, Kachin, and Karen States. The current violence in Rakhine and Chin States means this may be potentially an even more serious issue in 2020. If confirmed, I will urge the Burmese Government to ensure that all eligible citizens can cast a vote and will work with my team to monitor poll closures. The situation Rohingya people face is especially troubling, given the large-scale disenfranchisement and obstacles to voting as

a result of systemic discrimination. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. efforts to push on these issues.

Question. How will you ensure that U.S.-based social media companies, including Facebook, do not allow use of their platforms as vehicles for dangerous speech, hate speech, and political interference inside Burma?

Answer. I share your concern regarding the proliferation of online disinformation and hate speech in Burma. Our Embassy in Rangoon regularly engages with U.S. businesses operating in Burma, including social media companies, to encourage ethical business practices that promote good governance and human rights. This is particularly important in the context of Burma's upcoming election. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues to continue to build capacity within Burma's election commission, train political parties and civil society organizations, counter hate speech and dis- and misinformation, strengthen election security, and educate the electorate on democratic principles. These efforts include ongoing engagement and coordination with Facebook to limit the harm from disinformation and hate speech on the platform. If confirmed, I will continue this important work.

Question. On September 24, 2018, the State Department published to its website a report entitled "Documentation of Atrocities in Northern Rakhine State." Is it accurate that this published report contains only part of the information, analysis, or conclusions compiled in relation to that investigation? Do you commit to providing to Congress a full, detailed version of that report, the data collected to support it, or any version circulated internally prior to publication of that report?

Answer. The Department of State conducted its own documentation report on atrocities in Rakhine State, which we have shared with relevant U.N. investigation mechanisms and others. While I understand privacy and identity and source protection concerns related to some data require precautions be taken to safeguard the security and dignity of victims, survivors, and witnesses, if confirmed, I will work with the relevant bureaus and offices to further provide information to Congress on this issue.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. KENNETH R. WEINSTEIN BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Oversight

Question. If confirmed, do you commit that under your leadership, the U.S. Embassy will not take any action to support, promote, or participate in any matters related to, or that could be perceived as benefitting, the Trump Organization?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to make clear to all employees that retaliation of any kind has no place in federal government and will not be tolerated under your leadership? Do you agree that anyone found to have engaged in retaliation should be held fully accountable, up to and including losing their job?

Answer. Yes, I commit to making clear that prohibited personnel practices has no place in the federal government and will not be tolerated. I agree that those found to have engaged in retaliation should be subject to accountability and discipline consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Department policy.

Question. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups in the Foreign Service? In the Civil Service?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently undertaking to ensure leaders under my direction are fostering a culture and environment of inclusion. I will promote habits and practices among the leadership that focus on inclusion as a key driver for retaining diverse talent. I will promote Diversity and Inclusion Best Practices and tips for inclusive hiring practices and standardized interview guidance. I will support the review of existing mentoring programs and how they can be bolstered. I particularly look forward to working closely with Mission Japan's Council on Diversity and Inclusion.

Question. Do you commit to respond promptly to all requests for information by members of this committee?

Answer. Yes, with the understanding that any such response would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

Question. Do you commit to appear before this committee upon request?

Answer. Yes, with the understanding that if confirmed, any such appearance would be organized through the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs and conducted in accordance with long-standing Department and Executive Branch practice.

Question. Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any credible allegations of foreign interference in U.S. elections?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to report to appropriate authorities, including the FBI, Inspector General, and Congress, any attempts by foreign or private individuals to improperly influence U.S. foreign policy, particularly if you have reason to believe those efforts are adverse to U.S. interests?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. If you become aware of any suspected waste, fraud, or abuse in the Department, do you commit to report it to the Inspector General or other appropriate channels?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Democracy/Human Rights

Question. What are the most important actions you have taken in your career to date to support democracy and human rights? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. Coming from a family that lost numerous relatives in the Holocaust, the promotion of democracy and human rights is a central and passionate focus for me. I was a college intern at the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs at the State Department, and my doctoral dissertation focused on the philosophical case for freedom of conscience.

Accordingly, I have helped assure that the organization I head, Hudson Institute, regularly provides a platform to dissidents from around the world, especially those who have personally suffered the indignity of human rights abuses. In recent years, these have included Uighur leaders; democracy activists from Hong Kong; opposition figures from Syria; Nigerian school girls kidnapped by Boko Haram; Iraqi Christians and Yazidis persecuted by ISIS; dissidents from countries including Venezuela, China, Pakistan, Russia, Iran and Central Asia; refugees from North Korea; and families—Japanese, Korean and American—of North Korea abductees. Hudson experts, moreover, have championed numerous initiatives to promote international religious freedom, including the efforts that led to the annual religious freedom ministerial at the State Department.

Hudson Institute also has a strong focus on exposing and fighting the pernicious impact of kleptocracy around the globe. I testified in 2015 before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations in favor of the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, which later became law and has been an effective tool against numerous human rights abusers.

We have worked to end a tool often used by kleptocrats to hide their ownership stakes in the U.S.: the anonymous shell company. Legislation just passed in both houses with the support of the Trump administration to end anonymous shell company ownership. (I co-authored a June 2019 op-ed with Hudson fellow Nate Sibley on this subject.)

Question. What issues are the most pressing challenges to democracy or democratic development in Japan? These challenges might include obstacles to participatory and accountable governance and institutions, rule of law, authentic political competition, civil society, human rights, and press freedom. Please be as specific as possible.

Answer. Japan is a liberal parliamentary democracy with established rule of law, a vibrant civil society, free and fair elections, and constitutionally protected freedom of expression, including for the press. Japan also shares our support for human rights and democratic institutions. If confirmed, I hope to work together with the Government of Japan to make further advancements in promoting democratic development and human rights in Japan and throughout the Indo-Pacific region. If confirmed, I plan to work closely with the Japanese Government and civil society on continued promotion of freedom of expression and greater protection against discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, and sexual orientation.

Question. What steps will you take—if confirmed—to support democracy in Japan? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions? What are the potential impediments to addressing the specific obstacles you have identified?

Answer. Japan is a liberal parliamentary democracy with established rule of law and a vibrant civil society, and a long history of free and fair elections. If confirmed, I will continue to support and advocate for Japan's strong democratic system. The members of the Mission and I will engage both nationally and locally with government officials, civil society leaders, journalists and opinion makers, and activists to hear their views, share the American experience on issues of mutual concern, and identify areas of cooperation.

Question. How will you utilize U.S. Government assistance resources at your disposal, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program and other sources of State Department and USAID funding, to support democracy and governance, and what will you prioritize in processes to administer such assistance?

Answer. Given Japan's high income, the United States Government generally does not provide assistance or financial resources to Japan. However, if confirmed, I hope to continue cooperating with Japan on various programs supporting democracy and governance in third countries, especially as part of our shared vision of promoting a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with civil society members, human rights, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs, and other members of civil society in Japan? What steps will you take to proactively address efforts to restrict or penalize NGOs and civil society via legal or regulatory measures?

Answer. Yes, I am committed to meeting with civil society members, human rights, and other non-governmental organizations in the United States and in Japan. Japan's legal framework provides strong protections for various forms of expression and, if confirmed, I will actively advocate for continued freedom of expression for NGOs and civil society.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to meet with democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties? What steps will you take to encourage genuine political competition? Will you advocate for access and inclusivity for women, minorities, and youth within political parties?

Answer. If confirmed, I will meet democratically oriented political opposition figures and parties. Japan is a liberal parliamentary democracy and recent elections have been considered free and fair. No laws limit the political participation of women and minorities. At the same time, the percentage of women in elected office remains low. The number of ethnic minorities who have served in the National Diet is difficult to ascertain, but widely assumed to be small. There are only two openly LGBTI members of the Diet. If confirmed, I will advocate for greater access and inclusivity for women, members of ethnic minority groups, and youth in political parties.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Japan on freedom of the press and address any government efforts designed to control or undermine press freedom through legal, regulatory, or other measures? Will you commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press in Japan?

Answer. Japan's constitution provides for freedom of expression, including for the press, and the Government of Japan generally respects this freedom. Independent media are active and express a wide variety of views without restriction. If confirmed, I commit to actively engage with Japanese Government and non-governmental stakeholders on freedom of expression, including for members of the press, should there be any changes to that situation. If confirmed, I also commit to meeting regularly with independent, local press throughout Japan, and to working with

the Japanese Government to promote freedom of expression throughout the Indo-Pacific region in pursuit of our shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with civil society and government counterparts on countering disinformation and propaganda disseminated by foreign state or non-state actors in Japan?

Answer. Yes. One local effort in Japan is the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs' countrywide speaker program on cybersecurity and countering disinformation. Through public talks throughout Japan, this program promotes vigilance among the Japanese public and strengthens the security partnership between our two countries. If confirmed, I commit to continue our robust efforts to counter disinformation and propaganda, in partnership with civil society and government counterparts.

Question. Will you and your embassy teams actively engage with Japan on the right of labor groups to organize, including for independent trade unions?

Answer. Japan is one of the most important trade and investment partners for the United States, and the U.S. Government is actively engaged with Japan across the spectrum of economic issues, including labor rights. If confirmed, I commit to continue this engagement. Overall, Japan has laws providing for the right of labor unions and collective bargaining and has been enforcing them effectively.

Question. Will you commit to using your position, if confirmed, to defend the human rights and dignity of all people in Japan, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity? What challenges do the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people face in Japan? What specifically will you commit to do to help LGBTQ people in Japan?

Answer. I strongly believe in defending the human rights and dignity of all people in Japan, including LGBTI persons. Japan is a thriving, modern democracy but it, like many other democratic governments, has challenges dealing with LGBTI issues. As outlined in the latest Human Rights Report, Japan has no national law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identities, with only a small number of local governments having enacted ordinances banning such discrimination. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the Japanese Government and civil society to promote greater protection against discrimination based on race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO HON. KENNETH R. WEINSTEIN BY SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Human Rights

Question. What are your most meaningful achievements to date in your career to promote human rights and democracy? What has been the impact of your actions?

Answer. Coming from a family that lost numerous relatives in the Holocaust, the promotion of democracy and human rights is a central and passionate focus for me. I was a college intern at the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs at the State Department, and my doctoral dissertation focused on the philosophical case for freedom of conscience.

Accordingly, I have helped assure that the organization I head, Hudson Institute, regularly provides a platform to dissidents from around the world, especially those who have personally suffered the indignity of human rights abuses. In recent years, these have included Uighur leaders; democracy activists from Hong Kong; opposition figures from Syria; Nigerian school girls kidnapped by Boko Haram; Iraqi Christians and Yazidis persecuted by ISIS; dissidents from countries including Venezuela, China, Pakistan, Russia, Iran and Central Asia; refugees from North Korea; and families—Japanese, Korean and American—of North Korea abductees. Hudson experts, moreover, have championed numerous initiatives to promote international religious freedom, including the efforts that led to the annual religious freedom ministerial at the State Department.

Hudson Institute also has a strong focus on exposing and fighting the pernicious impact of kleptocracy around the globe. I testified in 2015 before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations in favor of the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, which later became law and has been an effective tool against numerous human rights abusers.

We have worked to end a tool often used by kleptocrats to hide their ownership stakes in the U.S.: the anonymous shell company. Legislation just passed in both houses with the support of the Trump administration to end anonymous shell company ownership. (I co-authored a June 2019 op-ed with Hudson fellow Nate Sibley on this subject.)

Question. What are the most pressing human rights issues in Japan? What are the most important steps you expect to take—if confirmed—to promote human rights and democracy in Japan? What do you hope to accomplish through these actions?

Answer. Japan is a liberal parliamentary democracy with established rule of law and a vibrant civil society. Japan also shares our support for human rights and democratic institutions. If confirmed, I hope to work together with the Government of Japan to make further advancements in promoting human rights in Japan, including greater protection against discrimination based on race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, and sexual orientation.

Question. If confirmed, what are the potential obstacles to addressing the specific human rights issues you have identified in your previous response? What challenges will you face in Japan in advancing human rights, civil society, and democracy in general?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with all pertinent stakeholders in the Government of Japan and civil society to promote greater protection against discrimination based on race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, and sexual orientation.

Question. Are you committed to meeting with human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and with local human rights NGOs in Japan? If confirmed, what steps will you take to pro-actively support the Leahy Law and similar efforts, and ensure that provisions of U.S. security assistance and security cooperation activities reinforce human rights?

Answer. I am committed to meeting with human rights, civil society, and other non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and in Japan. I am committed to supporting the Department's obligations under the Leahy Law and to ensuring the Embassy carries out robust vetting prior to providing any assistance.

Question. Will you and your embassy team actively engage with Japan to address cases of key political prisoners or persons otherwise unjustly targeted by Japan?

Answer. According to the State Department's 2019 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Japan, there were no reports of political prisoners or detainees. If confirmed, I will remain vigilant on this issue.

Question. Will you engage with Japan on matters of human rights, civil rights, and governance as part of your bilateral mission?

Answer. Yes. Governance is one of the three pillars captured by the administration's vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, and under this framework the United States and Japan have continued longstanding engagement on good governance that respects human rights and empowers citizens. If confirmed, I will continue our robust engagement with Japan on a variety of shared priorities, including human rights, civil society, and governance.

Diversity

Question. Research from private industry demonstrates that, when managed well, diversity makes business teams better both in terms of creativity and in terms of productivity. What will you do to promote, mentor, and support your staff that come from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently undertaking to foster a culture of inclusion and a representative workforce. I will encourage promoting Diversity and Inclusion in the hiring process through standardized interview procedures. I will promote the expansion of workplace flexibilities, including telework and alternative work schedules, and Leave Without Pay (LWOP) options, similar to "boomerang talent" programs in the private sector. I will learn from and listen to employees using mechanisms like the Open Conversations platform and the Department's new Centralized Exit Survey.

Question. What steps will you take to ensure each of the supervisors at the Embassy in Japan are fostering an environment that is diverse and inclusive?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support and promote the efforts the Department is currently undertaking to ensure leaders under my direction are fostering a culture and environment of inclusion. I will promote habits and practices among the leader-

ship that focus on inclusion as a key driver for recruiting and retaining diverse talent. I will promote Diversity and Inclusion best practices and tips for inclusive hiring practices and standardized interview guidance. I will support the review of existing mentoring programs and how they can be strengthened. I particularly look forward to working closely with Mission Japan's Council on Diversity and Inclusion.

Conflicts of Interest

Question. Do you commit to bring to the committee's attention (and the State Department Inspector General) any change in policy or U.S. actions that you suspect may be influenced by any of the President's business or financial interests, or the business or financial interests of any senior White House staff?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant federal ethics laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising any concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you commit to inform the committee if you have any reason to suspect that a foreign government, head of state, or foreign-controlled entity is taking any action in order to benefit any of the President's business or financial interests, or the interests of senior White House staff?

Answer. Yes, if confirmed, I commit to complying with all relevant laws, regulations, and rules, and to raising concerns that I may have through appropriate channels.

Question. Do you or do any members of your immediate family have any financial interests in Japan?

Answer. My investment portfolio includes diversified mutual funds, which may hold interests in companies with a presence in Japan, but which are exempt from the conflict of interest laws. I also currently hold a financial interest in a company which has a presence in Japan. I am committed to following all applicable ethics laws and regulations and remaining vigilant with regard to my ethics obligations.

Corruption

Question. How do you believe political corruption impacts democratic governance and the rule of law generally, and in Japan specifically?

Answer. I strongly believe political corruption has a significant negative impact on democratic governance and the rule of law. Specifically in Japan, Japanese law provides adequate criminal penalties for corruption by officials. The Japanese Government generally implements the law effectively, and, if confirmed, I commit to continue working with the Government of Japan to maintain democratic governance and the rule of law in Japan and cooperating on anticorruption efforts throughout the Indo-Pacific.

Question. What is your assessment of corruption trends in Japan and efforts to address and reduce it by that government?

Answer. Japanese law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials and the Japanese Government generally implements the law effectively. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with the Government of Japan on its continued efforts to eliminate corruption.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to strengthen good governance and anticorruption programming in Japan?

Answer. Governance is one of the three pillars of the administration's vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, and under this framework the United States and Japan have longstanding engagement on good governance that respects human rights and empowers citizens. Effective anticorruption efforts are a critical part of good governance. If confirmed, I will continue our robust engagement with Japan on a variety of shared priorities, including human rights, governance, and law enforcement cooperation to combat corruption both in Japan and other countries.

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED BY THE COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF
KENNETH R. WEINSTEIN'S NOMINATION TO BE U.S. AMBASSADOR
TO JAPAN



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



July 31, 2020

The Honorable James E. Risch
Chairman
Senate Committee
on Foreign Relations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Ranking Member
Senate Committee
on Foreign Relations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Menendez:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the nomination of Dr. Kenneth Weinstein, President and CEO of the Hudson Institute, to be the next U.S. Ambassador to Japan. As Executive Director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's U.S.-Japan Business Council, I have had the pleasure of working with Dr. Weinstein and highly recommend his nomination be approved by your committee.

It has now been one year since the United States has had an Ambassador in place in Japan. We believe that Dr. Weinstein's distinguished career, established leadership in foreign policy circles, knowledge of Japan and broader Asian regional dynamics and the esteem in which he is held globally, more than qualifies him to serve in this important role.

The mission of the U.S.-Japan Business Council is to advance U.S. business interests in Japan and promote stronger economic ties between our two countries. U.S.-Japan Business Council member companies collectively account for a substantial share of overall U.S. economic activity with Japan, and place high priority on doing business in Japan. To further strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance, we respectfully ask that the Committee favorably report Dr. Weinstein's nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Aiko Lane".

Aiko Lane
Executive Director

cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations



August 4, 2020

The Honorable James E. Risch
Chairman
Senate Committee
on Foreign Relations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Ranking Member
Senate Committee
on Foreign Relations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Menendez:

I am writing on behalf of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ) in support of the nomination of Dr. Kenneth Weinstein, President, CEO, and Walter P. Stern Chair of the Hudson Institute, for U.S. Ambassador to Japan and strongly recommend his confirmation by your committee.

Japan is one of America's most important allies and markets for U.S. business, with \$303 billion goods and services trade in 2019. Having an Ambassador in-country is crucial to maintaining the long-standing bilateral partnership. Having in place an extremely well-qualified Ambassador like Dr. Weinstein, with extensive knowledge of Japan, vast trade and policy experience, and recognition and thought leadership in U.S. policy and business circles related to Japan, would greatly benefit the U.S.-Japan alliance. The U.S.-Japan relationship is at a critical stage going into the second phase of the bilateral trade negotiations, and Dr. Weinstein's confirmation will provide the continued strong leadership needed to ensure the partnership continues to move in a positive direction.

The ACCJ has been at the frontline for U.S. business in Japan for over 70 years, with over 3,000 members, representing 600 companies in the major U.S. industries in Japan. As the voice of American business in Japan, we thank you for your consideration of Dr. Weinstein's nomination and confirmation as U.S. Ambassador to Japan.

Sincerely,

Peter Fitzgerald
President
The American Chamber of Commerce in Japan

The American Chamber of Commerce in Japan / www.accj.or.jp

Tokyo
Haseonic 39 MT Bldg. 10F
2-4-5 Azabudai
Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0041
Phone: +81 3 3433 5381
Fax: +81 3 3433 9454

Kansai
Dojima Park Bldg. 6F
1-1-8 Dojimahama
Kita-ku, Osaka 530-0004
Phone: +81 6 6345 9880
Fax: +81 6 6345 9890

Chubu
Marunouchi Fukao Bldg. 5F
2-11-24 Marunouchi
Naka-ku, Nagoya 460-0002
Phone: +81 52 229 1525
Fax: +81 52 222 8272

August 3, 2020

Dear Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

We are foreign policy professionals, many of whom have served the U.S. government in various capacities over the past few decades. Some of us are Democrats; some Republicans; and others have no partisan affiliation. We write to you today to support the nomination of Kenneth Weinstein to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Japan.

The U.S.-Japan relationship is not just the cornerstone of peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific but has become critical to America's global strategic posture. During the past twelve months, we have seen China's increasing crackdown in Hong Kong, growing assertiveness in the East and South China Seas, the global COVID-19 pandemic, as well as an ever more unstable North Korea with its nuclear capacity.

All of us know Ken Weinstein, are familiar with his foreign policy expertise, and believe he has the experience and temperament to be a superb ambassador to Japan.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Walter Mondale Vice President of the United States (1977-81) U.S. Ambassador to Japan (1993-96)	Dan Quayle Vice President of the United States (1989-93)
Daniel Coats United States Senator (2011-17) Director of National Intelligence (2017-19)	Joseph Lieberman United States Senator (1989-2013)
Nikki Haley U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (2017-19)	John V. Roos U.S. Ambassador to Japan (2009-13)
J. Thomas Schieffer U.S. Ambassador to Australia (2001-05) and Japan (2005-09)	Dennis Blair Commander-in-Chief U.S. Pacific Command (1999-2002)
Stephen Hadley National Security Advisor to the President (2005-09)	Jason Hyland Charge d'Affaires, U.S. Embassy Tokyo (2017)
H.R. McMaster Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution National Security Advisor to the President (2017-18)	Kurt Campbell Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (2009-13)

Robert M. Kimmitt Deputy Secretary of the Treasury (2005-09) U.S. Ambassador to Germany (1991-93) Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (1989-91)	Jamie Fly Counselor for Foreign and National Security Affairs, Senator Marco Rubio (2013-17) Director for Counterproliferation Strategy, National Security Council
Karen Kornbluh U.S. Ambassador to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2009-12)	J. Randy Forbes United States Congressman (2001-17) Chairman, Seapower and Projection Forces Former Distinguished Senior Fellow U.S. Naval War College
Alfred H. Moses Special Presidential Envoy (1999-2001) U.S. Ambassador to Romania (1994-97)	Kurt Tong U.S. Consul General to Hong Kong and Macau (2016-19)
Thomas C. Hubbard U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines (1996- 2000) and to the Republic of Korea (2001-04)	Randy Schriver Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo- Pacific Security Affairs (2018-19)
James Burnley IV U.S. Secretary of Transportation (1987-89)	Stuart A. Levey Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence (2004-11)
Charles Rivkin U.S. Ambassador to France (2009-13) Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State (2014-17)	Joseph S. Nye Jr. Distinguished Service Professor, Emeritus, Harvard Kennedy School Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (1994-95) Chair National Intelligence Council (1993-94)
Francis Fukuyama Senior Fellow, Stanford University	Nelson Cunningham Former Special Advisor to President Bill Clinton
Ryan Crocker U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan (2011-12), Iraq (2007-09), Pakistan (2004-07), Syria (1999-2001), Kuwait (1994-97) and Lebanon (1990-93)	Michael Green Director for Asian Affairs, National Security Council (2001-05) Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Senior Director for Asia
Elbridge Colby Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development (2017-18)	Lester Munson Staff Director, Senate Foreign Relations Committee (2013-15)

Thomas S. Kahn House Budget Committee, Democratic Staff Director (1997-2016)	Craig Kennedy Former President, German Marshall Fund of the United States
Vance Serchuk National Security Advisor to Senator Joseph Lieberman (2007-10)	Charles Kupchan Professor, Georgetown University Special Assistant to the President for National Security (2014-17)
Roger Zakheim Former General Counsel and Deputy Staff Director of the U.S. House Armed Services Committee and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense	James Zumwalt U.S. Ambassador to Senegal and Guinea- Bissau (2015-17)
Richard Fontaine Foreign Policy Advisor to Senator John McCain (2004-09)	Victor Cha Director for Japan and Korea Affairs, National Security Council (2004-07)
Alberto M. Fernandez Vice President, Middle East Media Research Institute U.S. Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea (2010- 12)	Randy Scheunemann National Security Adviser to Senate Republican and Majority Leaders Bob Dole and Trent Lott (1993-99)
Chris Brose Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Staff Director, U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee (2015-18)	Richard Stengel Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (2014-16)
Jeffrey Gedmin Former President and CEO, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (2007-11)	Walter Isaacson Author
Daniel Twining Member, Secretary of State's Policy Planning Staff (2007-09) Foreign Policy Advisor, Senator John McCain (2001-04)	David B. Shear Acting Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense (2014-17) Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs (2014-16) Former Ambassador to Vietnam (2011-14)
Edwin Feulner Jr. Founder and Past President The Heritage Foundation	Thomas Wright The Brookings Institution (Signing in personal capacity only)

Jeff Shell
Chairman, Broadcasting Board of Governors
(2013-17)

Christopher J. LaFleur
U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia (2004-07)

Marc Ginsberg
U.S. Ambassador to Morocco (1994-98) and
Deputy Senior Adviser to the President for
Middle East Affairs (1978-81)

Nancy Lindborg
Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for
Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian
Assistance, USAID (2010-14)