

Statement by Christopher Landau
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the United Mexican States
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
May 21, 2019

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

I'm honored to appear before you today as the nominee for Ambassador to Mexico. I'm very grateful to both President Trump and Secretary Pompeo for their trust and confidence. And I appreciate the time that the Members of this Committee and your staff have spent with me. The confirmation process has only reaffirmed my respect for our Founders' wisdom in requiring the advice and consent of the Senate for Ambassadorial nominations. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with all of you.

This hearing brings my life full circle. As an eight-year old boy, I attended my father's hearing as nominee for Ambassador to Paraguay. I'm here today, 47 years later, with my wife, Caroline, and our two children, Nathaniel and Julia. I'm incredibly grateful for their love and support, as well as their enthusiasm for this opportunity to serve our great country.

My dad, George Landau, was a career Foreign Service Officer. For him, and for our family, the Foreign Service was more than just a job; it was the path to the American dream. Both of my parents were immigrants who arrived here with nothing. My dad fled Austria alone, at age 18, shortly after the Nazi takeover in 1938, and was able to get a visa for Colombia, South America. He arrived there by boat, without speaking a word of Spanish. That was the beginning of my family's close connection with Latin America. My dad had two main objectives in Colombia: to get his parents safely out of Austria, and to get himself to the United States. Within three years,

he managed to accomplish both. With the help of the Catholic Church, he extracted his parents from Nazi-occupied Austria, thereby saving them from certain death, and they lived happily in Colombia for the rest of their lives and are buried there. And with the help of the Otis Elevator Company, my dad obtained a job in New York City, and arrived in this country in July 1941, just months before Pearl Harbor. After the war broke out, he joined the Army, and soon became both a military intelligence officer and an American citizen. He met my mother, Maria, on active duty in occupied Austria, and she came over as a war bride in 1947.

It was always my father's dream to join the Foreign Service, and he took and passed the exam in 1946, but wasn't allowed to join because he hadn't been a citizen long enough. Eventually, he met the citizenship requirements, and joined in 1957. Within 15 years, he became U.S. Ambassador to Paraguay, and then to Chile, and finally to Venezuela. He was nominated by, and served under, Presidents of both political parties. My parents devoted their lives to strengthening the bonds between the U.S. and Latin America. I wouldn't be here today but for the opportunities that this country, and particularly the Foreign Service, afforded my family. There's no other country in the world where immigrants like my parents could—through sheer talent, determination, and hard work—rise so fast and so far. For that, I'm deeply grateful.

I can think of no greater honor or privilege than the opportunity to represent our country in Mexico, and to continue my family's mission of building bridges between the U.S. and Latin America. I grew up in the region, and speak Spanish fluently. I focused on Latin American studies as an undergraduate, and fully intended to join the Foreign Service myself. Ironically, it was my dad who urged me to go to law school and get a professional degree. My 30-year career in the

law, in which I had the opportunity to brief and argue cases in the U.S. Supreme Court, all of the federal courts of appeals, and many state courts, has given me a profound respect for the rule of law, the importance of resolving disputes civilly, and the dignity of the individual. If confirmed, I'll bring these passions to my job in Mexico.

Our relationship with Mexico is of one of paramount importance and complexity. We share a nearly 2,000 mile border from San Diego, California, to Brownsville, Texas. More than 10 percent of all Americans – some 36 million people – are of Mexican heritage. Our cultures have grown increasingly intertwined, from the Starbucks in Mexico City to Hollywood blockbusters directed by Mexicans. There's a lot to celebrate in our relationship with Mexico that often gets lost amidst discussion of the challenges.

If confirmed as Ambassador, I'll continue this Administration's focus on a number of key priorities. The first will be to safeguard American sovereignty and ensure the rule of law at the border. That's obviously a huge job that involves many agencies. My role, if confirmed, will be to foster cooperation with the Mexican people and authorities. Neither country can solve the challenge of illegal immigration alone, and I'm convinced that we can find common ground.

Another key priority, if confirmed, will be the protection of the American people. The scourge of illegal drugs is devastating both our communities and Mexican communities. Again, I see this as an area where we share a common interest with Mexico, and pledge if confirmed to focus on strengthening our partnership in fighting drugs, with a particular focus on fentanyl, heroin, and methamphetamine. I'd also like to underscore the importance of protecting the many millions

of U.S. citizens who live in, and visit, Mexico. The U.S. Mission in Mexico is the largest consular operation in the world, and I fully understand and appreciate the value of those consular services to our fellow Americans and your constituents.

Finally, I'd like to emphasize the importance of our economic relationship with Mexico. One of the most dramatic changes in my lifetime has been the integration of the U.S. and Mexican economies. When I was in college, the leading book on U.S.-Mexico relations was called "Distant Neighbors." We used to have our backs to one another. Now, the leading book is called "Vanishing Frontiers," and Mexico recently became our largest trading partner in the world. This transformation offers benefits, but also presents challenges. If confirmed, I look forward to working for passage of the USMCA and to promote fair and reciprocal trade.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of this Committee, our relationship with Mexico is unique in its direct impact on the security and prosperity of the American people. If confirmed, I pledge to be a good and faithful steward of that relationship. Thank you.