

**Statement of Roberta S. Jacobson
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Mexico
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 15, 2015**

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

It is a great honor and privilege to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the next United States Ambassador to Mexico. I am deeply appreciative of the confidence the President and Secretary Kerry have placed in me by my nomination. I am also very grateful for the support of my family, beginning with my husband Jonathan, and our sons Gil and Daniel.

I have spent my entire 30-year career with the Department of State working on the relationship between the United States and the Americas/Western Hemisphere. As Director of the Office of Mexican Affairs for nearly five years, I became acutely aware of Mexico's gravitational pull on the gamut of U.S. interests in Latin America.

That relationship is unique in its enormous breadth and complexity and in its direct impact on the security, prosperity, and wellbeing of U.S. citizens every day. All evidence points to an even more interdependent future for our two countries. Almost \$1.5 billion in trade crosses the U.S. - Mexico border each day, supporting millions of U.S. jobs. Hundreds of thousands of people cross our nearly 2,000-mile long border legally each day and Mexico is, by far, the top foreign destination for American travelers. Fully 10 percent of all Americans – more than 33 million – are of Mexican heritage. The Mexican-American community is a vital part of our culture, our politics, and our values.

I led the team that worked closely with you in Congress to develop the U.S. proposal for the Merida Initiative, negotiated with cabinet-level Mexican counterparts, and supervised the delivery of U.S. training and equipment over a four-year period that gave Mexico an equity partnership in supporting our mutual security needs. We now have an unprecedented level of cooperation that is a model for security partnerships everywhere. In my four years as Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, I have remained deeply engaged in all aspects of our complex ties with Mexico and I am deeply honored that the President has nominated me to serve as Ambassador to Mexico.

If I am confirmed, I will continue to lead our team in further nurturing U.S. interests in Mexico. And while every nominee looks forward to working with, and

seeking the advice and counsel of, this Committee and the Congress, Mexico is a special case: This body enjoys its own wealth of experience on Mexico, and I intend to mine that wisdom to advance U.S. interests in all aspects of our relationship. My Job One, of course, is to secure and protect our mission personnel and their families as they serve our country in Mexico.

If confirmed as ambassador, I will continue this Administration's focus on a number of key priorities. The first will be to advance U.S. economic competitiveness and deepening the economic ties that are so central to opportunities, good jobs and growth. And those ties are indeed impressive: two-way trade in goods and services reached \$592 billion in 2014 – that is more than \$1.5 billion daily. Mexican exports to the United States contain on average 40 percent U.S. content. The United States buys more than 70 percent of Mexican crude oil exports and supplies Mexico with refined products and natural gas. Now, more than ever, there are increased opportunities for close partnerships between the United States and Mexico. In May 2013, Presidents Obama and Peña Nieto established two new mechanisms – the High Level Economic Dialogue and the Bilateral Forum on Higher Education, Innovation, and Research – to promote economic opportunities, education and research collaboration, and North American competitiveness. The United States and Mexico are both committed to expanding trade and investment throughout the Asia-Pacific region through the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement.

It will also be essential to reinforce American security through continued cooperation and partnership under the Merida Initiative. The Initiative represents a new chapter in the history of our relationship; one explicitly based on mutual respect and on shared responsibility for combating transnational criminal networks and protecting our citizens from the crime, corruption, and violence they generate. Neither of us can do this alone - nor, under these two administrations, do we have to. The State Department has forged strong partnerships to improve civilian security in affected areas to fight drug trafficking, organized crime, corruption, illicit arms trafficking, money laundering, and demand for drugs on both sides of the border. The U.S. government also is accelerating efforts to support and hold accountable the institutions that are essential to a stable society – police, justice systems, and civil society organizations – to adequately protect and defend the rule of law and human rights. If confirmed, I will focus on these efforts as the United States continues to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law through our continued high-level diplomatic engagement

The border is the seam where cooperation is most important to U.S. interests. Improving our ports of entry ensures the safe and efficient flow of

people and goods, vital to our economy and that of Mexico. We are committed to bringing our border infrastructure into the 21st century. We have renovated and expanded one of the world's largest border crossings at the San Ysidro port of entry near San Diego, where 50,000 vehicles and 25,000 pedestrians enter the United States each day, as part of ongoing efforts to make crossings as efficient and secure as possible in support of economic growth and development. We are building an innovative pedestrian terminal that will cross the border at the Tijuana Airport to facilitate and expand regional travel for business and pleasure. Nearly 40 percent of the Mexican produce we buy in U.S. supermarkets passes through the Nogales, Arizona crossing, and our renovations will expedite this vital trade. As we address Mexico's role in legal and clandestine migration to the United States, we must ensure orderly, safe, and lawful migration and protect the most vulnerable migrants. We also must continue close collaboration to address the phenomenon of unaccompanied children from Central America.

The United States enjoys robust and historic people-to-people ties with Mexico, to our benefit. We are focused on tapping that great human potential to enrich us both economically and culturally. More than 4,000 U.S. and Mexican students, teachers, and scholars have participated in our binational Fulbright-Garcia Robles program since 1948, and the United States is the top destination for Mexican students studying abroad. The United States and Mexico can accomplish great things together; through educational exchange, English language learning, professional training, and leadership development we can deepen people-to-people ties, develop a 21st century workforce, and expand economic opportunities for our citizens. I will build upon the success of President Obama's 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative and other innovative ways that expand the opportunities for Americans and Mexicans to build a common future.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. If confirmed, I will continue to work diligently to cement the U.S. partnership with Mexico. Muchas gracias, and I will be happy to answer any questions.