

Testimony of Luis Arreaga
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Guatemala
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
July 19, 2017

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Guatemala. I am deeply grateful for the trust the President and Secretary Tillerson have placed in me. If confirmed by the Senate, I will work with the Congress to advance our interests in Guatemala.

If you allow me to indulge, I am an immigrant born to a migrant worker and an elementary public school teacher whose sacrifice and teachings inspired me to come to this great nation and earn the privilege of becoming one of its adopted citizens. I have many people to thank for this moment and I cannot name them all. I do want, however, to single out my beloved family, for they have been a source of inspiration and indispensable support. Foremost is my wife Mary, to whom I owe everything. My children are here to share this special moment. They include my daughter Melania, who is also a Foreign Service Officer, my son-in-law Vince, grandchildren Elena and Sebastian, and my sons Juan Carlos and Luis.

I previously had the privilege of serving as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Iceland, so I understand what is required to represent the United States abroad. I have served in Latin America, Europe, and Canada as an economist and diplomat and have great respect for the importance of working with strong U.S. allies to protect our nation and the American people.

The United States and Guatemala have strong relations. These are rooted in common interests and people-to-people connections that go back generations. We work closely with our Guatemalan partners to promote prosperity, good governance, and security all of which are in the interest of our country.

Our engagement is at the highest levels. Vice President Pence, Secretary Tillerson, and Secretary Kelly met with Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales and his team in Miami at the Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America. At that meeting, we pledged to work together to promote investment and facilitate sustainable growth, and to combat corruption, narcotics trafficking, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations, all of which undermine stability there, threaten our country, and drive fleeing migrants to the United States.

If confirmed, I will work tirelessly with our partners in Guatemala to comply with these commitments. I look forward to expanding our programs on information sharing and capacity building that strengthen border security, dismantle criminal networks, and stem the tide of violence affecting the region. A safer and more secure Guatemala will have a positive effect on communities in both of our countries. Our work will also include programming that strengthens the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and especially the protection of human rights.

Security cooperation is just one part of our joint strategy. If confirmed, I will also strive to foster sustainable economic growth in Guatemala. By supporting efforts to facilitate trade, promote education, and minimize red tape, we can improve the business climate, spark investment, and help to reduce unemployment. We'll continue our emphasis on the Western Highlands, where most of the migrants

originate. We seek to create opportunities that benefit both Guatemalans and U.S. businesses looking to engage in the region.

Underlying all these efforts is a commitment by both governments to fight corruption and build upon the successful efforts by President Morales, CICIG, and the Attorney General to end impunity.

Let me conclude, by reiterating that, if confirmed, my duty would be, first and foremost, to the American people. There is much to be gained through cooperation with Guatemala as our safety and security are inextricably linked. In this role, I will be vigilant in protecting the interests of American citizens, both abroad and at home.

I thank you for the privilege of appearing today and welcome your questions.