

Statement of Donald R. Tapia
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Jamaica
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
July 31, 2018

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear here today as President Trump's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to Jamaica. I am grateful to the President and to Secretary Pompeo for the confidence they have placed in me. I would like to thank Senator Gardner for being here and speaking on my behalf as well.

If I may, I would like to thank my family and friends who have made the trip to be present today. To Londa Perkins, my grandson Joel Chidley, and the many other friends that are here today. I thank you for supporting me through this process. I will always carry the value and importance of family.

For years I was the CEO and owner of Essco Electric, a wholesale electrical company that was the largest Hispanic owned company in Arizona for five years in a row. Since retiring, I have been involved in various philanthropic and entrepreneurial ventures including Teen Lifeline, Boys & Girls Club of Phoenix, and the Arizona Animal Welfare League.

Growing up in a very destitute area of Detroit, Michigan, I never would have imagined that I would one day appear before the distinguished Members of this Committee seeking ambassadorial confirmation. I feel the same as Bubba Watson did, when he won the Masters at Augusta National. When asked if he had ever dreamed of winning the Masters he said, "I never had a dream go this far, so I can't really say it's a dream come true."

Having served in the United States Air Force, I am excited by the prospect of serving our nation once again. If confirmed as Ambassador to Jamaica I am firmly committed to building our partnership with the Jamaican government in the areas of security, prosperity, energy, education, and health.

If confirmed, I will pledge to work closely with Congress to advance our national interests in Jamaica. Safeguarding the welfare of all U.S. Citizens will be my highest priority. To achieve this, I will work to support our U.S. law enforcement agencies working in conjunction with Jamaican counterparts to identify and prosecute transnational criminal organizations, financial fraudsters, as well as human and drug traffickers.

Jamaica's proximity to the United States, and shared culture and language can facilitate increased engagement, investment, trade, and cooperation. Jamaica is ripe for development of renewable energy sources like geothermal, solar and wind power. Jamaica has made improvements, but still has high electricity rates, which reduce economic competitiveness and prevent them from investing in other areas like education and business enterprises. If confirmed,

I will continue to support the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) in their efforts to encourage renewable energy investments and diversification, infrastructure improvements, and small business development.

Jamaica is also subject to extreme weather events including hurricanes, storms, flooding, and earthquakes that lead to losses in capital stock and investments. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) helped strengthen a system for developing, financing and executing sustainable climate adaptation approaches in the region. If confirmed, I will support and work with the Jamaican government to strengthen its preparedness for and resilience to severe weather events.

Additionally, with 30,000 people living with HIV, Jamaica has one of the highest prevalence rates in the Caribbean. If confirmed, I will continue to support the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), working with all levels of government and civil society to ensure that people living with HIV are diagnosed and immediately receive treatment. This includes working with all partners to reduce stigma and discrimination and ensuring equitable access to prevention and treatment of this disease.

If confirmed, strengthening the United States partnership with Caribbean countries through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), our signature security partnership with fifteen Caribbean partner countries, would be a priority. I will also work closely with the Jamaican government to promote and foster human rights, including those of the LGBTI community, and in parallel, combat gender-based violence and human trafficking.

Overall, I believe my management and entrepreneurial skills, commitment to success, and leadership in business, community, and education, make me well qualified to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Jamaica, if confirmed. Mr. Chairman and esteemed Members of the Committee, I want to express my sincere appreciation for your consideration of my nomination as U.S. Ambassador to Jamaica. I would be happy to answer any questions.