

Statement of W. Robert Kohorst
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
October 5, 2017

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Murphy, and Members of the Committee, it is a pleasure and a privilege to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. I am honored by the confidence placed in me by the President and the Secretary of State.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and the Congress in advancing the interests of the United States in Croatia.

I would like to introduce my wife, Shelley Allen, our son, Kevin, and his wife, Kate, and our other son, Matt. Two of our grandchildren, William and Charlotte, unfortunately are too young to fly here and sit through these hearings, but I miss having them here with us.

I am humbled at the opportunity to appear before this historic committee, and I look forward to starting an ongoing dialogue with all of you. Although I do not have any recent government or Foreign Service experience, I have enjoyed business and personal successes that will suit me well if I am confirmed to represent the United States in Croatia. I have practiced law, worked for a large public company, and started my own business more than 20 years ago. I have learned how to manage people, transactions and money in both large and small settings. I have been actively involved in a number of philanthropic organizations. All of this requires hard work, good judgement, strong moral values, and the ability to work with others. If confirmed, I am prepared to bring all of these skills to my new responsibilities. And, maybe best of all, I will be supported by my wife, Shelley, who may be the real asset the United States government is getting in this deal.

Last summer, Shelley and I and a group of friends traveled throughout Croatia. We first visited the Dalmatian coast, from Kotor to Split. We then travelled to Zagreb, with a side trip to Plitvice Park, one of the truly amazing wilderness settings in the world. We were thrilled with the beauty of the country and the friendliness of the people. I look forward to the opportunity to spend time working with everyone in Croatia and building an even better relationship between our two nations.

In preparing for today's hearing, I have been truly impressed with how well our bilateral relationship with Croatia has been managed. Ambassador Noyes has been a terrific steward of the office, and it is clear that she has a great support team in Zagreb. I look forward to working with the Embassy staff in an open, friendly, and cooperative manner to achieve common goals. My management style is to respect everyone for their contributions to the effort, help each employee succeed, promote good moral values, and insist on great work.

If confirmed, my foremost priority as Ambassador will be promoting the United States' interests in Croatia and support a Europe whole, free and at peace. Of course, our interests can best be

achieved if they are compatible with Croatian interests. I intend to work hard to identify areas where we can mutually support each other.

My team and I will focus on:

- Strengthening the capabilities of a willing NATO ally.
- Supporting Croatia's role in promoting regional stability, cooperation, and Euro-Atlantic integration.
- Encouraging Croatia's contribution to regional energy security, while opening new markets to U.S. gas exports.
- Bolstering Croatia's economic recovery to make it a more attractive partner for American businesses and exporters.

Croatia has been a strong supporter of NATO, including providing troops for the NATO mission in Afghanistan. I look forward to strengthening our support of Croatia's military and making sure the working relationship between the United States and the Republic of Croatia is a model for the region, and the world.

I am particularly excited for Croatia as it expands on its opportunities within the European Union. The country has made great strides since it entered the European Union in 2013, and I intend to do my best to assist in maintaining that progress. Croatia's planned accession to the Schengen Area will only help deepen its integration to the European community and expand opportunities, especially for tourism.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Murphy, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. If confirmed, I look forward to hosting your visit to Croatia and to working closely with you all to advance the interests of the United States.