

Statement of Kelley Currie
Nominee for Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues
at the U.S. Department of State
Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to be the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues. I am honored to have this opportunity to serve my country and appreciate the confidence President Trump and Secretary Pompeo have shown in me with this nomination. I also want to thank Senator Isakson for his kind and generous introduction. I've been fortunate to be a constituent of his since he was elected to the Senate to represent the great state of Georgia, and we'll certainly miss his leadership. I wish him all the best and fully expect he will continue to serve State and our country in some way.

I wanted to take a moment to thank my family, some of whom are here today: my wonderful partner and husband Peter Currie, my children Mack and Sarah, and my mother in law Dottie Currie. I want to shout out to my family down in Georgia who are watching the proceedings: thanks Mom, G.G. and Emily for everything. And finally, to my friends and colleagues – especially all my State Department colleagues who have worked so hard to get us here – thank you so much for all your support.

Advancing the role of women and girls around the world, socially, politically and economically, is central to achieving U.S. foreign policy goals, and it is something to which I am deeply committed. Throughout my career, I have had the privilege to serve in various roles working to advance human rights protections, and defend the rights of women and girls from regimes that are threatened by the idea of freedom and equality. I started out as a young congressional staffer, working on legislation and other congressional initiatives to promote and protect women's human rights. This included early efforts to raise awareness about the Taliban's treatment of women in Afghanistan and the Burmese military's systematic use of sexual violence against ethnic women. At the International Republican Institute, one of my most important responsibilities was promoting women's political participation through our programming in Asia, and I saw first-hand how important and difficult it was to encourage women to run for office, train them to ask for campaign contributions, and otherwise demand a seat at the most powerful tables. And in every job I have had since, this has been a persistent thread -- whether I was interviewing Tibetan mothers about why they risked everything to get their children an education and religious freedom in India, or working with the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict to ensure the UN system is responding effectively to this horrific scourge. I have had the tremendous honor to work alongside and learn from so many amazing advocates, practitioners, political leaders and survivors. These brave women continue to inspire and motivate me.

Empowering women and girls around the world is also a vital national security issue. We know that countries are more peaceful, prosperous and stable when women are able to fully participate at all levels of government and the economy. In order to realize this goal, women and girls must be free from violence and discrimination in their homes, workplaces and communities.

The best way to make this happen is to make sure that women are involved in key decisions about peace and security in their communities and nations. Around the world, women are on the frontlines of some of the world's most pressing challenges: they are preventing atrocities, brokering ceasefires, delivering aid, implementing transitional justice and countering terrorism. Evidence shows that women's participation in peace-building, accountability efforts, security sector reform and countering violent extremism leads to better outcomes—not just for women, but for their families, their communities, and entire countries. Yet women historically have been absent from the places and processes where critical decisions are made about their communities' and countries' security and power structures. It is past time to reverse this historic trend and bold U.S. leadership will remain key to this effort. We are already leading through the passage of the Women, Peace and Security Act – the first country in the world to pass such legislation -- and the implementation efforts that are underway across the administration. If confirmed, I will ensure that the GWI office is driving progress on the new U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security and proactively lead efforts to advance its implementation.

Security and economic opportunity for women are also intrinsically linked. Women represent half of the population and are key drivers of economic growth. Yet, their potential as employers, entrepreneurs, and workers remains underdeveloped, under-resourced and underappreciated. Meaningful women's economic empowerment often requires changes to policies and societal norms that have historically precluded women from fully participating in the economy. It also relies on women's ability exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms in the workplace, at home, and in their communities, safe in the knowledge that their governments will protect them and not persecute them.

I am proud of the Administration's commitment to women's economic empowerment through the Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative and am committed to advancing this ambitious initiative, if confirmed. The State Department is uniquely positioned to carry out the diplomatic and policy tasks required to deliver on this agenda. In particular, identifying and reducing the policy, legal, political and regulatory barriers faced by women is critical to building a strong and durable foundation for women's economic empowerment. If confirmed, I look forward to leading U.S. efforts on this front.

To do this important work, we must also invest in the girls of today who will be the leaders of tomorrow. With today's large global youth population – the so-called “youth bulge” – it is mission critical that we ensure the next generation of girls receive the skills and education needed to become productive members of society. The under-representation of women and girls in STEM fields – not only as students, teachers and researchers, but also as managers, leaders, entrepreneurs and other role models – is an area ripe for public-private engagement and action.

While the United States has long been a global leader on these issues, far too many women and girls around the world still face debilitating barriers and violence. We have to focus our efforts; build new partnerships with the international community; effectively utilize the new tools Congress and the White House have built out; and be bold in our advocacy. But we cannot do this alone; we need strong partners here in the United States and abroad. If confirmed, I look

forward to working with our colleagues and counterparts across the U.S. government and around the world to advance and protect the rights of women and girls.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today. I look forward to your questions.