

**Statement of Sean P. Lawler**  
**Nominee to be Chief of Protocol of the United States**  
**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**November 1, 2017**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you so very much for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am humbled beyond words to appear before this distinguished body as President Trump's nominee for Chief of Protocol of the United States. I have a deep gratitude to the President, the First Lady, and Secretary Tillerson for their trust and confidence in nominating me for this position. Knowing any accomplishments I have are shared, I would like to acknowledge my wife Grace, who is here with me, and my son Conor, who was not able to join. I owe everything to their support and inspiration.

Born and raised on the Southwest Side of Chicago, I enlisted in the Navy directly out of High School, and shortly into my first enlistment, I lost both my parents. My mother to breast cancer and my father a few short months later to a broken heart. The Navy quickly became my family. Throughout my 21 years of service, I married, started my own family, and worked as hard as I could to succeed – not only to better provide for my family, but with a desire to have a greater role in serving my country. My wife is an immigrant of Ireland, now a naturalized citizen, and my son is attending college and growing up entirely too fast, and I sit here as a proud and humble example of what is magnificent about this country of ours.

My military service resulted in many life lessons, but none more than service before self. Throughout my career, I was fortunate enough to work under phenomenal leaders and mentors who taught me, corrected me and groomed me for continued growth – and I did my best to train and lead our next generation of volunteer patriots and impart the same lessons. I learned valuable management and leadership skills as I climbed through the ranks. In my particular career field, I spent many years on the personal staffs of Flag & General Officers and senior members of our government. Among my responsibilities throughout several tours of duty were to manage administrative and personal details so they may devote a larger portion of their time to other important matters. Those duties included matters of protocol, etiquette and tradition in coordinating myriad events and ceremonies both ashore, underway and overseas. Following retirement, I spent five years as the Chief of Protocol in a dynamic and exciting sub-unified combatant command and then in my current position on the National Security Council where I currently work closely with my State Department colleagues in coordinating the foreign engagements for the President.

The Chief of Protocol advises, assists, and supports the President of the United States, the Vice President, and the Secretary of State on official matters of national and international protocol, as well as serving as the President's representative to visiting foreign leaders and bilateral chiefs of missions in the United States. . If confirmed, I look forward to contributing in a unique and meaningful way to advancing the principals of diplomacy and enhancing our relations with the diplomatic community by working with a team of exceptional professionals at the State Department and White House whom I have had the pleasure of getting to work with since January. I have witnessed firsthand the selfless dedication and patriotism that is uncommon outside military service.

The many divisions of the Office of the Chief of Protocol are integral in successful diplomacy and furthering the foreign policy goals of the administration. The Protocol staff works regularly to build bridges of cooperation and goodwill domestically and across the globe. Blair House, which is an historical treasure, provides a world-class venue in accommodating Presidential foreign guests and events hosted by Cabinet-level officials. Ceremonials is responsible for supporting events hosted by the President and Vice President, planning and executing arrangements for official functions hosted by the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and the Chief of Protocol and organizing the participation of the diplomatic corps in official events. Diplomatic Affairs is responsible for the agrément process of new bilateral chiefs of mission, including presentation of credentials, coordination with the diplomatic corps and guidance, consultation and mediation of matters involving senior mission representatives and workers employed by foreign mission personnel. Diplomatic Partnerships provides outreach to the foreign diplomatic corps serving in Washington to promote greater insight and understanding of the United States and its economy, people and culture, its flagship program is Experience America. Gifts is responsible for the selection and purchase of all gifts given by the President, Vice President, Secretary, and their respective spouses to foreign leaders and processing all gifts from foreign governments given to the President, Vice President, Secretary, and other U.S. government officials. Visits is responsible for planning and executing detailed programs for visiting chiefs of state, heads of government and other high-ranking officials hosted by the President, Vice President, and Secretary of State and supports overseas travel of the President and Vice President and their respective spouses and is also responsible for planning and execution of foreign travel by U.S. presidential delegations as directed by the White House. And finally I would like to acknowledge the Management team which administers human and financial resources and general services operations for the Office of the Chief of Protocol to accomplish all its vital and demanding work.

I believe my experience for nearly three decades in government service makes me a well-qualified candidate for this position, and if confirmed, I look forward to what I expect to be the highlight of my career—serving our great nation alongside the outstanding professionals at the White House and Department of State and liaising with the outstanding diplomatic corps here in Washington, D.C. to continue to build on the framework and foundation for fostering diplomacy.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear and for your consideration in continuing to serve my country.