

NOMINATIONS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2025

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:33 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James E. Risch presiding.

Present: Senators Risch [presiding], Ricketts, McCormick, Lee, Cruz, Scott, Cornyn, Shaheen, Murphy, Kaine, Booker, Van Hollen, and Rosen.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH, CHAIRMAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO

Senator RISCH. The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

Thank you all for being here today. I see we have a nice, robust crowd to watch the proceedings. This is a public proceeding.

We welcome everyone to this proceeding but I will tell you that, again, this committee has zero tolerance for interruptions or any attempt to communicate with a member of the committee or a witness during the hearing.

We have important business to do for the United States of America. It cannot be interrupted. If it is, we have folks who will arrest the interrupters, and you will be arrested and banned from the committee for a year.

So with that I hope that is not necessary. It usually is not but occasionally is.

And with that, we will certainly welcome our nominees and congratulations to all of you for having the nomination of the President of the United States to do the job you are nominated for.

I am going to make a few opening remarks, and I will then yield to my distinguished colleague from New Hampshire to make opening remarks.

We will then hear from each of you for about 5 minutes. If you want to go longer than that feel free to submit what you want for the record, and we will publish it in the record.

We will then open it for a round of questions from every member to participate.

So thank you again to each of you and to your families. We all know how the families sacrifice to do these things, and we appreciate not only you but your families.

Mr. Bozell, as you are aware, the U.S.-South Africa relationship is at a crossroads, and I would say that is about as kind as I can say it.

We must decide whether it can be salvaged or whether to treat the South African government as it has treated us and that is like an adversary.

Its corruption is robbing the South African people. Its leaders pick fights with Washington, and its deepening ties with Iran, China, Russia come at the expense of our allies like Taiwan and Israel.

It is critical that if confirmed as Ambassador you engage with the government to advance U.S. interests and challenge the status quo that is bad for South Africans and America's relationships with South Africa.

I look forward to hearing your plans for this important mission.

Mr. Leon, as you know, Spain has been an important partner of the United States, but I share President Trump's concerns regarding Spain's commitment to our shared interests.

Spain was one of the first countries to make the gross mistake of recognizing Palestine state and has called for an arms embargo against Israel, which only rewards the terrorists that plague the Middle East.

Those kinds of actions encourage Hamas instead of deterring them. Spain is the only NATO ally that has refused to commit 5 percent of its GDP to defense spending. President Trump has made it clear that Spain needs to get with the program, especially as Russia ramps up its provocations against our common allies.

And Spain has failed to address the security risks China poses to the transatlantic community, notably by continuing government contracts with Huawei and pursuing closer economic ties with Beijing. Both of those are very dangerous.

Mr. Leon, I hope you will work with your counterparts in Spain to fix these mistakes.

Mr. Ghalib, Kuwait is an important partner in a particularly turbulent region of the world. Dating back to the Gulf War the U.S. has had a vested interest in the security of Kuwait and has maintained a deep partnership with the country including a vital partner in the counter-ISIS mission.

Further, U.S. business has been involved in Kuwait for 4 years. That is why it is particularly disappointing that Kuwait has refused to pay U.S. companies for work performed in Kuwait, and very importantly, Kuwait has been critical of Israel's efforts to defend itself against Hamas and Iran's influence.

As America remains a steadfast ally of Israel, the President has nominated you to defend U.S. support for Israel in Kuwait. That will be your solemn responsibility.

Ms. Namdar, the enormous passport and visa backlogs during the pandemic demonstrated the importance of the work that consular officers do every day on behalf of the American people.

Consular officers are often the first U.S. officials Americans contact when things go wrong while traveling abroad, and when people from other countries make plans to spend their money in America consular officers are often the first people they see.

Consular affairs officers are also the first line of defense to protect our country from those who might seek to do us harm. You must be responsive to the needs of American citizens abroad and to Members of Congress who hear from them and represent them when things go wrong.

I hope you will take this responsibility seriously. I know you will. Your role will also carry a tremendous amount of charge with respect to how America is viewed on the world stage, and I look forward to hearing your plans to improve the efficiency of America's consular offices.

Mr. Christensen, the U.S. was one of the first countries in the world to recognize Bangladesh after its independence in 1971, and we remain one of Bangladesh's top trade and investment partners.

The country is experiencing drastic change after the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government last year. While making progress on reform, Bangladesh continues to face tremendous challenges including growing religious extremism.

Mr. Christensen, if confirmed as ambassador I hope that you will work with your counterparts to promote stability in the country and protect American interests.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how our relationship with Bangladesh should evolve during this time as well as your priorities in this role.

Thank you again to each of our nominees and their families and for your willingness to take on this task that you have agreed to take on, and I look forward to productive conversations this morning. I appreciate your time.

With that, I yield to my distinguished colleague from New Hampshire.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JEANNE SHAHEEN,
RANKING MEMBER, U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Sorry it is so cold in here. We are trying to get the temperature up a little bit. So—

Senator RISCH. Feels good to me.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, you are from Idaho.

[Laughter.]

Senator RISCH. You are New Hampshire.

Senator SHAHEEN. I know. I know.

Senator RISCH. Come on.

Senator SHAHEEN. But anyway, hopefully it will get a little warmer in a little bit.

Thank you to all of our nominees. Congratulations on your nominations and thank you to your families and friends who are here to support you today.

This committee is considering five nominations today. These will be the first since the government shut down, and I just want to make clear, Mr. Chairman, that I hope the State Department will provide Congress not just with nominations as we move forward but also with witnesses for hearings and briefings and that they will respond to our requests for information, because I am also on the Armed Services Committee, and the entire legislative affairs

operation at the Pentagon is fully staffed while over 90 percent remains furloughed at the State Department.

So I hope we can get the government open shortly, but I also hope that State will be responsive.

Senator RISCH. I share that, Senator. I share that hope.

Senator SHAHEEN. Yes, I know you do.

I am pleased to see today that we have a career Foreign Service officer on today's panel who is prepared to serve in Bangladesh at a time when the U.S. needs democratic partners in Southeast Asia, along with nominees to Kuwait, an essential partner in the Middle East, to Spain, an important NATO ally, to South Africa, a crucial partner on trade and foreign policy, and to the Consular Affairs Bureau at the State Department.

Consular affairs is perhaps one of the most important roles in the Department as you will assist Members of Congress in advocating for our constituents as well as others, obviously, who contact the State Department.

Ms. Namdar, I hope this committee can rely on you to maintain strong lines of communication with us if we have constituents who need assistance, whether that is a lost passport, visa adjudications, international child custody disputes, international adoptions, or support in emergency situations, and I will just tell you that I have had all of those examples in my office.

But we will turn to you for information and assistance in resolving these kinds of challenges.

Mr. Bozell, as the chairman indicated, our relationship with South Africa is at a challenging inflection point.

I do not share this Administration's view that South Africa has committed genocide against white Afrikaners. I think this is a dangerous slope, and I think this kind of attack only helps spread anti-American sentiments and promotes China and makes our country less safe.

We need strong relationships with our allies and partners to confront the PRC, to build economic prosperity, and to strengthen trade ties.

Mr. Ghalib, I must say I have grave concerns about some of the statements that you have made, particularly those that seem to justify the October 7 attack against Israel.

Local reporting quotes you as saying that reports of sexual violence committed by Hamas on October 7 were lies and deception. I can tell you I have seen video, and I am very clear that those were not lies and deception.

I find the statement offensive, if true, and I am sure that many of my colleagues here today, some of whom have traveled to Israel in the wake of the attacks, would agree. Today I expect to hear from you an unequivocal condemnation of the horrific crimes committed on October the 7th.

Mr. Leon, Spain is an important NATO ally and a bilateral partner for the U.S., so today I hope you will address how you plan to foster that partnership, if confirmed.

And finally, Mr. Christensen, Bangladesh is a country undergoing immense change, and I am pleased that you have served in the Indo-Pacific region before and in fact that you have served in

Bangladesh before. Your knowledge and expertise will be essential in helping us address regional security and migration issues.

So, again, thank you to all of our nominees. I look forward to hearing from you today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISC. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

I am going to start with Ms. Namdar so if—oh, I have got a couple of introductions. Sorry.

Senator Lee, you are up.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE LEE,
U.S. SENATOR FROM UTAH**

Senator LEE. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

It is my honor and great pleasure to introduce and offer my full, wholehearted support for the nomination of my friend Mr. Brent Bozell to be the U.S. Ambassador to South Africa.

Mr. Bozell has spent his entire life defending truth and exemplifying the values of our great nation. His life's work has shaped the media landscape in a favorable way, in a way reflecting his unwavering commitment to free speech, to individual liberty, and to private enterprise.

Brent has been an America first pioneer from the very beginning and a lifelong champion of the freedoms that we hold dear. He founded the Media Research Center in 1987.

Ever since then the Media Research Center has successfully archived, recorded, and monitored hundreds of thousands of hours of televised media. In the era of the internet it has also documented thousands of cases of online censorship.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to the MRC and to Mr. Bozell for the data and myriad educational resources that have shaped the press and online platforms and done so in a way consistent with the First Amendment where the antidote to problematic speech is more speech, not censorship.

Besides his success at MRC and related activities, Mr. Bozell is an esteemed author, columnist, and publisher. As a writer, he has authored a national bestseller and his biweekly column appeared for 25 years across numerous major outlets throughout the country.

He holds a degree in history from the University of Dallas and was awarded an honorary Ph.D. by his alma mater in 2015. But of all these achievements his most remarkable endeavor is his family.

He is a dedicated husband, father of five children, and grandfather of 17 grandchildren. I have no doubt that upon his confirmation Mr. Bozell will build upon our relationship with South Africa and enhance American interests in Pretoria.

We are at a crossroads with that particular strategic partner, and it is more important than ever for the U.S. to craft a rigorous diplomatic strategy in and related to South Africa.

What was once the party of Nelson Mandela—the African National Congress—has now lost ground in South Africa, and the coalition government is on a course that could upend decades of democratic progress and unravel the U.S.-South African relationship in significant ways, from the unjust treatment of Afrikaners to leading the unfounded case against Israel's defensive war in Gaza.

I trust that Mr. Bozell can chart a new course, one that prioritizes U.S. interests first and foremost, advocates for the fair treatment of minority Afrikaners, and stands with our ally Israel.

There is great potential for deepening economic development and security cooperation with South Africa, and I am more than confident that Mr. Bozell has the experience, the tenacity, the personal skills to realize this potential. It really is a privilege to know Mr. Bozell and to witness his successes firsthand.

He will be an asset to the “America First” foreign policy vision, and I look forward to each of you getting to know him today as I have and even more so to his confirmation to serve in South Africa.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator Scott.

**STATEMENT OF HON. RICK SCOTT,
U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA**

Senator SCOTT OF FLORIDA. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman.

It is my honor today to introduce my friend and Floridian Benjamin Leon, who was wisely nominated by President Trump to be the U.S. Ambassador to Spain.

He is supported today by his family and I am honored to have him in front of this committee as he prepares to represent our great State, the Cuban-American community, and the United States on the world stage.

I am lucky to have known Ben for many years. He is the embodiment of the American dream, having arrived in the United States after fleeing Cuba’s illegitimate and repressive regime with his family when he was just a teenager.

From nothing he built successful businesses while giving back to his community and pursuing philanthropic opportunities. He has built one of the premier health care companies in the United States.

His businesses have positively impacted the lives of thousands of Americans in the Miami-Dade County area and continue to grow.

But his talent is not limited to the private sector. He is, clearly, willing to give back and serve the nation that allowed him to live his dreams. His work ethic, sharp mind, and love of his country and community will serve him well as a U.S. Ambassador. He has deep family ties to Spain and will bring an understanding of its culture and heritage to this role.

I am confident that he has the qualities and experience necessary for this role to enact President Trump and Secretary Rubio’s “America First” agenda, ensure Spain is a fair partner to the United States. He will serve President Trump and the American people well in this role.

Ben, you have my complete support, and to my colleagues on this committee I urge you to join me in supporting his confirmation.

Senator RISCH. Thank you so much, Senator Scott.

We will now hear from Ms. Namdar.

You are up. Give us 5 minutes of your best.

**STATEMENT OF MORA NAMDARKHAN, OF TEXAS, TO BE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS**

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of this committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as the Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs. I am grateful to the President and to Secretary Rubio for their confidence in me.

I would like to thank my family for their constant support. As the daughter of Iranian immigrants and a proud native of Texas, my commitment to public service is rooted in the opportunities this country has afforded me and my family.

I am deeply honored to be in a position to give back. I want to say thank you to the American people for this great opportunity.

I have founded and led businesses, practiced law both in Washington, DC and Texas, and dedicated much of my academic and professional life to national security and human rights, areas that lie central to the work of the State Department.

If confirmed, I will lead the Bureau of Consular Affairs with a mission rooted in the national interest. As Secretary Rubio has articulated, every policy we pursue must answer three key questions: does it make America safer, does it make America stronger, does it make America more prosperous.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs is at the heart of that mission. If confirmed, I will focus on three strategic priorities—first and foremost, the safety and security of American citizens overseas.

If confirmed, I will prioritize ensuring that no American is left behind. Whether it is a passport lost in a remote city or a loved one wrongfully detained by a hostile regime, every American abroad deserves the full support and attention of their government.

Under President Trump's leadership we have seen the safe return of dozens of Americans through a decisive and unapologetic defense of American citizens.

I will work closely with our Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, the National Security Council, and our embassies worldwide to bring wrongfully detained and illegally detained Americans home and prevent future cases through diplomacy, deterrence, and enhanced consular support.

Americans must know that their government will never forget them, will never stop fighting for them, and never negotiate from a position of weakness when their freedom is at stake. That is the standard we must meet.

While the world has become safer under President Trump's leadership, crisis and conflicts continue to arise which demand vigilance and swift action.

During the June crisis in the Middle East the dedicated men and women of the State Department and particularly the Bureau of Consular Affairs worked tirelessly around the clock to assist impacted Americans.

They remain ready to assist American citizens and their loved ones wherever and whenever the next global crisis occurs.

Second, upholding and improving the integrity of our immigration system is a critical national security priority. Every visa adjudication impacts national security and public safety.

It is essential that our consular officers are equipped with the resources and support necessary to perform their duties effectively.

As Secretary Rubio has emphasized, consular officers have the responsibility to ensure that visas are issued only to individuals who meet the criteria and do not pose a threat to the United States or our interests.

Under President Trump's leadership, the border is the most secure it has ever been. The Bureau of Consular Affairs in collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security and law enforcement officials works tirelessly to uphold the President's commitment to a safer and more secure homeland.

I remain steadfast to ensure that the privilege of a U.S. visa is granted only to those who meet the qualifications, that visa holders adhere to the terms of their visas, and that individuals who violate those terms or disregard U.S. laws will lose the privilege of holding a U.S. visa.

Visa decisions can also make the United States more prosperous. Qualified tourists, students, temporary workers, and professionals who follow the law and return to their home countries all contribute to making America great.

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that President Trump's priority of making the 2026 FIFA World Cup the greatest sporting event in history, draws millions of spectators and fans to our cities.

Third, efficiency in our operations. Innovating the Bureau of Consular Affairs—innovation in the Bureau of Consular Affairs is essential. It not only enhances the safety of Americans but also improves services to the American people, more than 51 percent of whom now hold a U.S. passport.

A prime example of these efforts is the introduction of the online passport renewal system. The timely and efficient improvements to our passport services will be a pillar of my focus to ensure that the Bureau of Consular Affairs remains committed to security, efficiency, and exceptional customer service for the American people.

Finally, I recognize that the success of consular affairs depends not only on the sound policy and capable execution of our team but also on strong and transparent partnership with Congress.

Whether it involves a constituent's passport emergency, a child abduction, or the detention of an American overseas, I understand the urgency and the human stakes behind each case.

If confirmed, I will ensure that your inquiries are met with transparency, responsiveness, and a spirit of shared service to the American people.

Thank you.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?
Answer: Yes
2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?
Answer: Yes
3. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?
Answer: Yes
4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?
Answer: Yes
5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?
Answer: Yes

Margaret Namdala

Printed Name: [Signature]

Date: Oct 23, 2025

[The prepared statement of Ms. Namdarkhan follows:]

Prepared Statement of Mora Namdarkhan

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of this Committee. I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Rubio for their confidence in me.

I would like to thank my family for their constant support. As the daughter of Iranian immigrants and a proud native of Texas, my commitment to public service is rooted in the opportunities this country has afforded my family. I am deeply honored to be in a position to give back. I want to say "thank you" to the American people for this great opportunity.

I have founded and led businesses, practiced law in both Texas and the District of Columbia, and dedicated much of my academic and professional life to national security and human rights—areas that lie central to the work of the State Department.

If confirmed, I will lead the Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) with a mission rooted in national interest. As Secretary Rubio has articulated, every policy we pursue must answer three key questions:

Does it make America safer? Does it make America stronger? Does it make America more prosperous?

CA the heart of that mission. If confirmed, I will focus on three strategic priorities:

First—One of the most solemn responsibilities of the Bureau of Consular Affairs is the safety and security of American citizens overseas. If confirmed, I will prioritize ensuring that no American is left behind. Whether it's a passport lost in a remote city, or a loved one wrongfully detained by a hostile regime, every American abroad deserves the full support and attention of their government.

Under President Trump's leadership, we have seen the safe return of dozens of Americans overseas; wrongfully detained individuals like Ksenia Karelina, Marc Fogel, Keith Siegel, and George Glezmann, whose freedom was secured through a decisive and unapologetic defense of American citizens. That legacy must continue. I will work closely with our Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, the National Security Council, and our embassies worldwide to bring wrongfully and illegally detained Americans home and prevent future cases through diplomacy, deterrence, and enhanced consular support. Americans must know that their government will never forget them, never stop fighting for them, and never negotiate from a position of weakness when their freedom is at stake. That is the standard we must meet.

While the world has become safer under President Trump's leadership, crises and conflicts continue to arise, demanding vigilance and swift action. Throughout the recent conflict in the Middle East, the dedicated men and women of the State Department, and particularly the Bureau of Consular Affairs, worked tirelessly around the clock to assist impacted American citizens depart safely. State Department safety and security messaging reached tens of thousands of Americans, providing critical updates and guidance. They remain ready to assist American citizens and their loved ones whenever and wherever the next global crisis occurs. If confirmed, I will also work to ensure that American citizens receive clear, timely, and reliable information about every country in the world, empowering them to make informed decisions before traveling.

Second—Upholding and improving the integrity of our immigration system is a critical national security priority. Every visa adjudication is a critical decision impacting national security and public safety. It is essential that our consular officers are equipped with the resources and support necessary to perform their duties effectively. As Secretary Rubio has emphasized, "Consular officers have the responsibility to ensure that visas are issued only to individuals who meet the criteria and do not pose a threat to U.S. interests. If someone violates the terms of their visa or engages in activities that undermine our foreign policy, consular officers have the authority to revoke their visa."

Under President Trump's leadership, the border is the most secure it has ever been. CA, in collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security and law enforcement officials, works tirelessly both domestically and internationally to uphold the President's commitment to a safer and more secure homeland. I remain steadfast in supporting our operations at home and abroad to ensure that the privilege of a U.S. visa is granted only to those who meet the qualifications, that visa holders adhere to the terms of their visas, and that individuals who violate these terms or disregard U.S. laws will lose the privilege of holding a U.S. visa.

Visa decisions not only make America safer and stronger, but they also make America more prosperous. If confirmed, I will work to achieve President Trump's priority of making the 2026 FIFA World Cup the greatest sporting event in history. The Bureau of Consular Affairs is already supporting visa issuances for the official FIFA teams and spectators.

Third—Efficiency in our operations. Innovating CA not only enhances the safety of Americans but also improves service to the American people, more than 51 percent of whom now hold a U.S. passport. In fiscal year 2025, CA issued a record 27 million passports. A prime example of these efficiency improvements is the introduction of online passport renewal, which allows American citizens to save both time and money by applying for passports from the comfort of their own homes. Passport specialists and agencies across the country are diligently processing applications, and many Americans can now renew their passports entirely online—eliminating the need for in-person appointments, mailing envelopes, writing checks, or even paying for passport photos. The timely and efficient operation of passport services exemplify the CA's continued commitment to security, efficiency, and exceptional customer service for the American people. While routine passport renewals are officially processed within 4–6 weeks, some private citizens have reported turnaround times as short as 2 weeks.

Innovation plays a critical role in strengthening national security. If confirmed, I will ensure that CA has all available tools to consider information when reviewing applications for possible ineligibilities and to enhance screening and vetting processes for visa applicants. We must continuously develop its capabilities to meet new demands and emerging challenges while upholding the highest standards of security in a rapidly changing global environment.

Additionally, I am committed to ensuring that CA fulfills its congressional mandate to process immigrant visa applications in as timely a manner as possible. Our dedicated professionals, both domestically and abroad, are working to improve immigrant visa processing, including strengthening security.

Finally, I recognize that the success of the bureau depends not only on sound policy and capable execution, but also on a strong and transparent partnership with Congress. Whether it involves a constituents passport emergency, an adoption case, a child abduction matter, or the detention of an American overseas, I understand the urgency and human stakes behind each inquiry that reaches the bureau. If confirmed, I will ensure that your inquiries are met with transparency, responsiveness, and a spirit of shared service to the American people. I look forward to your questions.

Senator RISCH. Thank you. Thank you very much.
We will turn now to Mr. Bozell.

**STATEMENT OF LEO BRENT BOZELL III, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE
AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF
SOUTH AFRICA**

Mr. BOZELL. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of this committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa.

I am thankful to the President and to Secretary Rubio for their visionary leadership and the trust they have placed in me through my nomination.

I would like first to acknowledge the steadfast love and support of my extraordinary wife Norma, who is seated behind me, my five children, one of who is here, their four spouses, and our 17 grandchildren. Each one is a blessing from heaven.

I come from a family devoted to public service. My father spent his life advocating for America to regain her moral footing.

My uncle William F. Buckley was the intellectual leader of the modern conservative movement. My uncle James L. Buckley served his country as Undersecretary of State, a Federal judge, and in the position he most cherished, United States Senator.

Although I started my career in politics at the National Conservative Political Action Committee and have led many other political groups, my experience transcends politics.

The late Senator Joe Lieberman and I disagreed on most everything politically, yet he was my champion in the nonpartisan clarion call to restore decency to television.

The late Senator Gaylord Nelson and I were in opposite corners during the Contra war in Nicaragua, but when I formed an international commission to bring free and fair elections to that country he was my co-chairman.

I have also served as bipartisan presidential election observer in Nicaragua in 1990 and again in 1992 in Guatemala. I know when and how to put political differences aside to advance a greater good.

If confirmed, I will approach my ambassadorship with respect for the South African people. South Africa is our largest trading partner on the African continent, and more than 500 businesses in South Africa employ over 250,000 South Africans.

I take seriously my responsibility for ensuring the safety of the nearly 400,000 American citizens who annually visit South Africa, the 30,000 who live there, and for the care of the hard working diplomats at our U.S. embassy and consulates.

I come before you at a challenging moment for U.S.-South Africa relations. The President has expressed serious concerns about South Africa that for too long have been unaddressed.

When people and businesses in South Africa believe their private property rights are at risk, when many South Africans feel unsafe in their homes, when rampant corruption and unfair business practices hold back the South African economy, and when South African politicians greet as friends those who seek to destabilize the world's peace and security, then common ground between our two countries feels harder to find.

If confirmed as ambassador, in addition to supporting U.S. citizens in South Africa I will work on the following priorities.

I will communicate our objections to South Africa's geostrategic drift from nonalignment toward our competitors including Russia, China, and Iran.

I will press South Africa to end proceedings against Israel before the International Court of Justice and to pressure the International Criminal Court prosecutor to discontinue this lawfare, which is belied by Israel's support for the ceasefire in Gaza and commitment to the rules of war throughout the conflict.

Second, I will advance the President's invitation to Afrikaners who wish to flee unjust racial discrimination. I will explore how we can support the South African government in making sure all South Africans can thrive free from the threat of violence.

I will support the President's call for the South African government to rescind its support for the expropriation of private property without compensation.

Finally, I will advocate for business interests by promoting fair trade practices and reduce barriers that will level the playing field for U.S. companies and empower South Africa as an engine of economic growth, creating a more prosperous future for both our countries.

It is essential to actively engage on areas of disagreement while seeking opportunities to foster mutual benefit. I see the real opportunity for lasting partnership.

Distinguished Senators, I appreciate your time today. If confirmed it would be the honor of a lifetime to serve my country and this Administration. I welcome your questions. Thank you.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?

Answer: Yes

2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?

Answer: Yes

3. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

Answer: Yes

4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?

Answer: Yes

5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer: Yes



Printed Name: L. Brent Bozell III

Date: 10-23-25

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bozell follows:]

Prepared Statement of Leo Brent Bozell III

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of this Committee.

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I come from a family devoted to public service. My father spent his life advocating for America to regain her moral footing. My uncle William F. Buckley Jr. was the intellectual leader of the modern conservative movement. My uncle James L. Buckley served his country as Undersecretary of State, Federal judge, and in the position he most cherished, United States Senator.

Although I started my career in politics at the National Conservative Political Action Committee, and have led many other political groups, my experience transcends politics. The late Senator Joe Lieberman and I disagreed on most everything politically, yet he was my champion in the nonpartisan clarion call to restore decency to television. The late Senator Gaylord Nelson and I were in opposite corners during the Contra war in Nicaragua, but when I formed an international commission to bring free and fair elections to that country, he was my Co-Chairman. I served as a bipartisan Presidential election observer in Nicaragua in 1990, and again in 1992 in Guatemala. I know when and how to put political differences aside to advance a greater good.

If confirmed, I will approach my Ambassadorship with respect for the South African people. South Africa is our largest trading partner on the African continent, and more than 500 U.S. businesses in South Africa employ over 250,000 South Africans. I take seriously my responsibility for ensuring the safety of the nearly 400,000 American citizens who annually visit South Africa, the 30,000 who live there, and for the care of the hardworking diplomats at our U.S. embassy and consulates.

I come before you at a challenging moment for U.S.-South Africa relations. The President has expressed serious concerns about South Africa that for too long have been unaddressed. When people and businesses in South Africa believe their private property rights are at risk; when many South Africans feel unsafe in their homes; when rampant corruption and unfair business practices hold back the South African economy; and when South African politicians greet as friends those who seek to destabilize the world's peace and security, then common ground between our two countries feels harder to find.

If confirmed as Ambassador, in addition to supporting U.S. citizens in South Africa, I will work on the following priorities.

- I will communicate our objections to South Africa's geostrategic drift from non-alignment toward our competitors, including Russia, China and Iran. I would press South Africa to end proceedings against Israel before the International Court of Justice and to pressure the International Criminal Court prosecutor to discontinue this lawfare, which is belied by Israel's support for the ceasefire in Gaza and commitment to the rules of war throughout the conflict.

- Second, I will advance the President's invitation to Afrikaners who wish to flee unjust racial discrimination. I will explore how we can support the South African government in making sure all South Africans can thrive free from the threat of violence. I will support the President's call for the South African government to rescind its support for the expropriation of private property without compensation.

- Finally, I will advocate for business interests by promoting fair trade practices and reduced barriers that will level the playing field for U.S. companies and empower South Africa as an engine of economic growth, creating a more prosperous future for both our countries.

It is essential to actively engage on areas of disagreement while seeking opportunities to foster mutual benefit. I see the real opportunity for a lasting partnership.

Distinguished Senators, I appreciate your time today. If confirmed, it would be the honor of my life to serve my country and this Administration. I welcome your questions. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Bozell.
Mr. Leon.

STATEMENT OF BENJAMIN LEON, JR., OF FLORIDA, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF SPAIN, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE PRINCIPALITY OF ANDORRA

Mr. LEON. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen—
Senator RISCH. You need your—oh, there you go.

Mr. LEON. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and members of the committee, it is a great honor and privilege to appear before you today as the United States Ambassador nominee to Spain and Andorra.

I deeply appreciate the opportunity to testify today, and I am humbled by the confidence President Trump and Secretary Rubio have shown in me.

At the outset, I want to thank my wife and family, who are present here today, for their love and support, which is always with me. I am grateful as well to the memories of my parents who overcame great challenges to start anew in the United States.

In 1961 we came to Miami from Cuba to begin a new life in this line of opportunity. My father and I worked together to build a successful healthcare business and create a model of accessible and high quality medical care.

I believe my background in business will prove essential. As the founder of Leon Medical Centers, I have spent decades fostering a healthcare network that provides essential services to the community in Miami.

I have also supported Miami-Dade College where my contribution established the Benjamin Leon School of Nursing to bring needed talent to the nursing profession.

I am also proud of my support to CasaCuba at Florida International University, a project celebrating Cuban culture, history, and traditions, and as the founder of Besilu Collections I have made significant contributions to the equestrian world.

Our purebred Paso Fino horses, a breed whose Spanish origin underscores the close, lasting ties between Spain and the Western Hemisphere, compete in high profile events showcasing the patience and strategic vision that I bring to all endeavors.

I recognize the importance of our profound and historic relationship with Spain, one built on shared values, mutual respect, and a deep cultural connection.

If confirmed, I commit to use the skills I have honed over many years of strategic planning, communication, negotiation, to build an even stronger relationship between the United States and our important ally, Spain.

Spain played a crucial role in the American Revolution, providing vital support to achieve our independence. Spanish forces captured west Florida, securing the southern supply route and the Mississippi River.

Spain also provided essential funds and supplies including financing the final siege of Yorktown with gold and silver from Havana, then Spanish Cuba.

Our shared history is a testament to the strength of our alliance and shared values including the promotion of democracy, free speech, and human rights.

These principles guide our bilateral relationship and our efforts to safeguard national security. As ambassador I would work tirelessly to strengthen this vital relationship, focusing on four key priorities.

First, I will prioritize the well being and safety of all American citizens living and traveling through Spain and Andorra.

Second, I will enhance economic and trade relations between our two nations. Our economic partnership is already strong. We have a trade surplus with Spain, and we are Spain's largest investor.

I will prioritize initiatives that further promote trade in Spain with Andorra. By fostering economic cooperation we can create jobs and promote innovation on both sides of the Atlantic.

Third, I will deepen our security and defense cooperation. Spain is a key NATO ally and host to thousands of our troops. Our collaboration on security matters is essential for maintaining stability in Europe and beyond.

I will work to strengthen our defense partnership, including increasing Spanish defense spending and investments and continuing to join military exercises. Enhancing our security ties will help address common threats such as terrorism and cyber attacks.

Finally, if confirmed, drawing on my unique background as a Cuban exile I will advocate for the promotion of human rights, democratic values, and the rule of law.

I will support efforts with Spain toward a more just and democratic world. This includes advocating for the rights of the Cuban people and supporting Spain's efforts to uphold democratic principles.

I look forward to working with the government of Spain, civil society, and the private sector to build upon our already strong bilateral relations and expand the political, commercial, educational, cultural, and artistic ties between our countries.

I also look forward to fostering our relationship with the principality of Andorra to further our joint goals of supporting democracy, human rights, and financial transparency.


In closing, I will work closely with this body and all Members of Congress to ensure your concerns are addressed and that we work together to advance U.S. interests while strengthening our partnership with Spain and Andorra.

I am committed to serving the United States with dedication and integrity. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?
Answer: Yes
2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?
Answer: Yes
3. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?
Answer: Yes
4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?
Answer: Yes
5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?
Answer: Yes


Printed Name: Benjamin Leon Jr.
Date: 10/23/25

[The prepared statement of Mr. Leon follows:]

Prepared Statement of Benjamin Leon, Jr.

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and Members of the Committee,

It is a great honor and privilege to appear before you today as the United States Ambassador-nominee to Spain and Andorra. I deeply appreciate the opportunity to testify today, and I am humbled by the confidence President Trump and Secretary Rubio have shown in me.

At the outset, I want to thank my wife and family for their love and support, which is always with me. I am grateful as well to the memories of my parents, who overcame great challenges to start anew in the United States. In 1961, we came to Miami from Cuba to begin a new life in this land of opportunity. My father and I worked together to build a successful healthcare business and create a model of accessible and high-quality medical care.

I believe my background in business will prove essential. As the founder of Leon Medical Centers, I spent decades fostering a healthcare network that provides essential services to the community in Miami. I've also supported Miami Dade College, where my contributions established the Benjamin Leon School of Nursing to bring needed talent to the nursing profession.

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I recognize the importance of our profound and historic relationship with Spain, one built on shared values, mutual respect, and a deep cultural connection. If confirmed, I commit to use the skills I have honed over many years—strategic planning, communication, negotiation—to build an even stronger relationship between the United States and our important ally, Spain. Spain played a crucial role in the American Revolution, providing vital support to achieve our independence. Spanish forces captured West Florida, securing the southern supply route and the Mississippi River. Spain also provided essential funds and supplies, including financing the final siege of Yorktown with gold and silver from Havana, then Spanish Cuba.

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Finally, if confirmed, drawing on my unique background as a Cuban exile, I will advocate for the promotion of human rights, democratic values and the rule of law. I will support efforts with Spain toward a more just and democratic world. This includes advocating for the rights of the Cuban people and supporting Spain's efforts to uphold democratic principles.

I look forward to working with the government of Spain, civil society, and the private sector to build upon our already strong bilateral relations and expand the political, commercial, educational, cultural, and artistic ties between our countries. I also look forward to fostering our relationship with the Principality of Andorra to further our joint goals of supporting democracy, human rights, and financial transparency.

In closing, I will work closely with this body and all Members of Congress to ensure your concerns are addressed, and that we work together to advance U.S. interests while strengthening our partnerships with Spain and Andorra. I am committed to serving the United States with dedication and integrity.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your questions.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Leon.
Mr. Christensen.

STATEMENT OF BRENT CHRISTENSEN, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Mr. CHRISTENSEN. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be United States Ambassador to the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

I am honored by this nomination and grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for the trust and confidence they have shown in me.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you to advance U.S. foreign policy interests in Bangladesh.

Thank you to my wife Deanne who is here with me today. For the past two decades she has joined me around the world from San Salvador to Dhaka to Omaha, and I am grateful for her sacrifice and support across my diplomatic career.

Bangladesh, the eighth most populous country in the world, often does not receive the attention it deserves as it is overshadowed by its even larger neighbors.

With my over 20 years of experience working on U.S. policy toward Bangladesh across my foreign service career, including a prior tour in Dhaka, I understand well its importance and the significant U.S. interests there.

Bangladesh's strategic location makes it an important participant in an open, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. Bangladesh is also at a pivotal point. Student-led protests in August 2024 brought down a government that had been in power for 15 years.

The people of Bangladesh will go to the polls early next year, the country's most consequential election in decades, to choose a new government and a new path forward. The United States supports Bangladesh in its journey toward a bright and democratic future.

If confirmed, I look forward to leading the embassy Dhaka team to build strong ties with both the current interim government and its democratically elected successor to advance the U.S.-Bangladesh relationship.

Often referred to as one of the new Asian tigers, Bangladesh shows significant economic potential. Having overcome tremendous challenges, Bangladesh is now on the cusp of graduation from least developed country status, a true tribute to the resilience and perseverance of the Bangladeshi people.

If confirmed, I will work to promote opportunities for U.S. business, reduce trade barriers and the trade deficit, and strengthen U.S.-Bangladesh economic ties.

For over 8 years now Bangladesh has hosted one of the largest refugee populations in the world. Nearly 1.3 million Rohingya currently live in the Cox's Bazar area of Bangladesh after fleeing their homes in Burma's Rakhine state.

Bangladesh and the international community, led by the United States, have done a remarkable job supporting the Rohingya people since 2017. I have been to the Rohingya camps myself, seen the work for myself, and spoken to the Rohingya people.

The disproportionate effort by the United States to fund the response, however, is not sustainable. We need more countries to increase financial support to ease the burden on us.

It will also be important to work through the United Nations and other partners to streamline operations, reduce duplication of effort, and deliver aid more efficiently.

If confirmed, I will work with the government of Bangladesh, the international community, and colleagues across the U.S. Government, including this committee, on a viable and enduring way forward.

If confirmed, it would be an honor to return to Bangladesh as ambassador to lead the talented men and women of U.S. embassy Dhaka and advance the U.S.-Bangladesh partnership.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to your questions.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?

Answer: Yes

2. Do you commit to keeping this Committee fully informed about the activities under your purview in a timely manner?

Answer: Yes

3. Do you commit to engaging in meaningful consultation while policies are being developed, not just providing notification after the fact?

Answer: Yes

4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?

Answer: Yes

5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?

Answer: Yes



Printed Name: Breat Christensen

Date: 23 Oct 25

[The prepared statement of Mr. Christensen follows:]

Prepared Statement of Brent Christensen

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

I am honored by this nomination and grateful to President Trump and Secretary Rubio for the trust and confidence they have shown in me. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you to advance U.S. foreign policy interests in Bangladesh.

Thank you to my wife Deanne, who is here with me today. For the past two decades, she has joined me around the world, from San Salvador to Dhaka to Omaha, and I am grateful for her sacrifice and support across my diplomatic career.

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If confirmed, it would be an honor to return to Bangladesh as Ambassador to lead the talented men and women of U.S. Embassy Dhaka and advance the U.S.-Bangladesh partnership. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to your questions.

Senator RISCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Christensen.
Mr. Ghalib.

STATEMENT OF HON. AMER GHALIB, OF MICHIGAN, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE STATE OF KUWAIT

Mr. GHALIB. Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. It is a great honor to be nominated by

President Trump to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the State of Kuwait.

If confirmed, I pledge to work to advance the interests of the United States and strengthen the enduring U.S.-Kuwaiti partnership.

Kuwait is a critical ally in a region of strategic importance to the United States. Our relationship is built on shared interests and mutual respect.

It is my goal to deepen this partnership across various domains including security, economic cooperation, political dialogue, and cultural exchange, all while ensuring our efforts directly benefit America.

I appreciate the trust President Trump and Secretary Rubio have placed in me. We may come from different communities with different backgrounds, but serving and representing the interests of the American people is our ultimate common goal.

We may also have different views about some topics, and that is normal for us as Americans. Otherwise, the First Amendment would be meaningless. Our greatest American values are freedom, democracy, and equality before the law.

These values are essential and define our American identity. However, we know these values are not universal and that billions of people around the world do not enjoy the rights and freedoms we have.

We must, therefore, be practical and realistic in how to engage the world to advance U.S. interests. I believe my life journey is an inspirational one that defines what the American dream can look like.

In December 1997 I came to the United States as a teenager, leaving my entire family behind in Yemen. The last words I heard from my dad while giving me a farewell hug were, "Son, you are now going to be the backbone of the family, so make us proud."

When I arrived in the U.S. I had no choice but to start work immediately. My first job in the United States was in an auto parts factory.

I understood the value of an education, and even with a demanding full time job I completed my last year of high school. I started college in 2001, wanting to study political science.

My family, friends, and teachers advised me otherwise. They convinced me I had no future in politics in the United States due to my background and accent, especially after 9/11.

I decided to go for medicine, and for 10 years that is what I studied. I was the first in my family to graduate from high school, earn a few bachelor's degrees, seek master level education and a professional doctorate level education in medical school, all of which happened without a social support system.

My family and I are very proud of my journey, which started as a farmer in Yemen to an auto worker to a health care professional to the mayor of my city, and if confirmed, to a U.S. Ambassador to the State of Kuwait.

This could not have been possible without the support of my family, especially my wife and three daughters who are watching me now and waiting to celebrate my confirmation.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all the people who came to support me from different States, and as I was looking and meeting them outside they all almost are Democrats coming to support me.

Is that not interesting, Senator Shaheen?

My pathway would not be possible in most countries, and I am deeply appreciative of the incredible opportunities the United States has provided me with.

Kuwait is a close partner for stability and security in the region. Kuwait holds 6 to 7 percent of the world's proven oil reserve, has one of the biggest sovereign wealth funds in the world, invests hundreds of billions of dollars in the United States, hosts the fourth largest overseas U.S. military presence, and is a significant humanitarian aid donor worldwide.

If confirmed, one of my priorities as Ambassador will be to enhance our security cooperation with Kuwait. The United States and Kuwait have a long history of military cooperation, and it is essential that we continue to build on this foundation.

In line with President Trump's priorities I will work closely with the Kuwaiti officials to ensure our joint efforts in counterterrorism, defense, security, and regional stability are robust and effective.

Economic cooperation is another cornerstone of our relationship. The United States and Kuwait have strong trade ties, but there is significant potential for growth.

I will prioritize efforts to expand bilateral trade investments, create jobs in the United States, advocating for a level playing field for U.S. business in Kuwait, and addressing any barriers to trade and investments will enrich both our economies.

If confirmed, I will engage Kuwaiti officials to address Iran's destabilizing activities in the region. My utmost duty is the safety and security of the American people and service members in Kuwait.

By working together, we can enhance our collective security and ensure that the destruction and chaos caused by Iran does not jeopardize prosperity and security in the Middle East.

I am committed to implementing President Trump's priorities and ensuring that our efforts in Kuwait align with broader U.S. foreign policy goals.


I look forward to working with the members of this committee as well as with our partners in Kuwait to achieve these goals.

Thank you for your consideration, and I welcome any questions that you may have.

NOMINEE COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Additional Nominee Questions**

1. Do you agree to appear before this Committee and make officials from your office available to the Committee when invited?
Answer: Yes
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Answer: Yes
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Answer: Yes
4. Do you commit to responding to requests for briefings and information requested by the Committee and its designated staff as soon as practicable?
Answer: Yes
5. Do you agree to ensuring that Chiefs of Mission fully support CODELs and STAFFDELS, with exceptions only for simultaneous or overlapping visits by the President or First Lady of the United States, the Vice President, or the Secretaries of State or Defense?
Answer: Yes



Printed Name: AMER GHALIB

Date: 10/23/2025

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ghalib follows:]

Prepared Statement of Amer Ghalib

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.

It is a great honor to be nominated by President Trump to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the State of Kuwait. If confirmed, I pledge to work to advance the interests of the United States and strengthen the enduring U.S.-Kuwait partnership.

Kuwait is a critical ally in a region of strategic importance to the United States. Our relationship is built on shared interests and mutual respect. It is my goal to deepen this partnership across various domains, including security, economic cooperation, political dialogue, and cultural exchange, all while ensuring our efforts directly benefit America.

I appreciate the trust President Trump and Secretary Rubio have placed in me. We may come from different communities, with different backgrounds, but serving and representing the interests of the American people is our ultimate, common goal. We may also have different views about some topics, and that is normal for us as Americans; otherwise, the First Amendment would be meaningless. Our greatest American values are freedom, democracy, and equality before the law. These values are essential, and define our American identity. However, we know these values are not universal, and that billions of people around the world do not enjoy the rights and freedoms we have. We must therefore be practical and realistic in how we engage the world to advance U.S. interests.

I believe my life journey is an inspirational one that defines what the American Dream can look like. In December 1997, I came to the United States as a teenager, leaving my entire family behind in Yemen. The last words I heard from my dad while giving me a farewell hug were, "Son, you are now going to be the backbone of the family, so make us proud." When I arrived in the U.S., I had no choice but to start work immediately. My first job in the United States was in an auto parts factory. I understood the value of an education, and even with a demanding full-time job, I completed my last year of high school. I started college in 2001, wanting to study political science. My family, friends, and teachers advised me otherwise. They convinced me I had no future in politics in the United States due to my background and accent, especially after 9/11. I decided to go for medicine, and for 10 years, that's what I studied. I was the first in my family to graduate from high school, earn a few bachelor's degrees, seek master-level education, and a professional doctorate-level education, all of which happened without a social support system.

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If confirmed, one of my priorities as Ambassador will be to enhance our security cooperation with Kuwait. The United States and Kuwait have a long history of military cooperation, and it is essential that we continue to build on this foundation. In line with President Trump's priorities, I will work closely with Kuwaiti officials to ensure our joint efforts in counterterrorism, defense, security, and regional stability are robust and effective.

Economic cooperation is another cornerstone of our relationship. The United States and Kuwait have strong trade ties, but there is significant potential for growth. I will prioritize efforts to expand bilateral trade and investment, creating jobs in the United States. Advocating for a level playing field for U.S. businesses in Kuwait and addressing any barriers to trade and investment, will enrich both our economies.

If confirmed, I will engage Kuwaiti officials to address Iran's destabilizing activities in the region. My utmost duty is the safety and security of American citizens and service members in Kuwait. By working together, we can enhance our collective security and ensure the destruction and chaos caused by Iran does not jeopardize prosperity and security in the Middle East.

I am committed to implementing President Trump's priorities and ensuring that our efforts in Kuwait align with broader U.S. foreign policy goals. I look forward to working with the Members of this committee, as well as with our partners in Kuwait, to achieve these objectives.

Thank you for your consideration, and I welcome any questions you may have.

Senator RISCHE. Thank you, Mr. Ghalib.

We are now going to do a round of questions 5 minutes each starting with myself and to Senator Shaheen, and back and forth between the Rs and the Ds.

So with that, Mr. Leon, I would like to start with you. One of my strongest concerns and I think shared by most people on this dais is our NATO relationship, which over the years has been there, gotten a little stale, but with the Russian attack on Ukraine has been greatly reenergized.

Today, NATO is stronger than it has ever been. A good share of that is due to President Trump's constant reminder to them that this is an association where we are all bound together by a common goal and that is the NATO treaty.

The NATO treaty, of course, we all agreed that we would pull the wagon together for NATO purposes in—as we tried to add Sweden and Finland, which we eventually got done.

We were frustrated by a couple of members dragging their feet on it and pursuing their own interests rather than pulling the wagon together with the rest of NATO.

We are now getting the same thing with Spain. They are the only NATO country that has refused to commit to the 5 percent defense amount.

This is a matter of particular importance to not only the President but everyone here, and I hope you will speak frankly to them and be able to persuade them that if they want to belong to NATO they need to act like a NATO ally, and that is when 31 other countries say they are going to spend 5 percent on defense, which is absolutely critical, they need to do the same thing.

Can you tell me how you might go about that?

Mr. LEON. Thank you for the question, Senator.

It is a very important question, and it is a great challenge.

It is really concerning that after Mr. Pedro Sanchez committed in the meeting they had in France, I believe, to that all European nations including Spain would actually come up to the 5 percent only to now claim that they are only going to go to the 2 percent.

I will work diligently with the government of Spain to make them understand that that is a huge mistake because they have always been a great partner to the United States for almost for a lifetime.

Like, they have been a great host to our military for 70 years and so on. We know the rest of it. But I will work diligently with the government of Spain in order to reverse that policy and fulfill the commitment that Spain, through its prime minister, made in France to the 5 percent.

Senator RISCHE. I hope you will convey to the Spanish what a major problem this is and how great a concern it is for not only the President of the United States but also for Congress, and they—I would assume they have a clear understanding of how important the membership in NATO is to themselves.

And I hope you will underscore that, and I hope you carry that message to them for us, but thank you.

Ms. Namdar, having acted as Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs in the past it is good to have you going there because we have got some problems going on there, as you know, and backlogs are a real problem.

And you do not deal as much with policy but you do deal with the mechanics, which are just as important as policy to people that are trying to get it done.

So I want to underscore a couple things for you. The J-1 visas are incredibly important to a lot of business concerns in the United States.

Virtually everywhere people are having difficulty getting workers, and the J-1 is particularly helpful in certain industries.

So I would like to hear your thoughts on that.

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. Thank you for the question, Senator.

I agree with you, Consular Services and Consular Affairs is an extremely important bureau. I think it can be a tool of diplomacy and a tool of policy depending on who is using it, and I think the Secretary and the President will probably want to do that and make sure that we effectively implement the President's policies through Consular Affairs.

I think the J-1 visas and all other visas will be implemented as efficiently as possible. As you know, I am not in the bureau now. I have had experience there, but when and if confirmed I look forward to looking into that issue for you.

Senator RISCH. Well, we look forward to you getting there and moving—take a strong message to them we need help, and they are very important to us.

The other category is the religious workers visa. They have recategorized that. I do not know if you know this or not.

There is great concern around the country because there are a lot of religious workers here in the various religious organizations in America, and their visas are going to expire on January 1 because they have not been able to get them renewed.

Do you know anything about that problem?

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. As you know, I am not yet confirmed, Senator, but I am happy to—

Senator RISCH. But are you aware of the problem?

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. I have heard that there is a question about it, but I have not been tracking it closely, sir.

Senator RISCH. We are going to get in touch with you because it is a serious problem, and it is widespread throughout the United States, and I am surprised you have not heard about it because it is of serious concern.

So we will be talking.

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. Sounds great.

Senator RISCH. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ghalib, I want to begin with you, and I think we all appreciate that you have a very inspiring personal story.

But I am, as I said in my opening remarks, very concerned about some of the statements that you have made, and frankly, what appear to be antisemitic views.

The local news outlet in your city reported in October 2023 that you claim that reports of sexual violence committed by Hamas on October 7 were, and I quote, “a campaign of lies and deception” and that there was not, quote, “any evidence to support that these crimes occurred against victims.”

What is even more concerning is that when you met with my staff before this hearing you did not deny that you said those statements, which if that is true I appreciate that at least you were honest about it, but you reiterated that you believe there was no evidence of sexual violence against victims of October the 7th.

Now, as my staff relayed to you, there is well documented evidence, evidence that I have seen personally, that Hamas terrorists deliberately use sexual violence against women and children.

I was also disappointed to hear that you appointed an individual to the city planning commission who stated that the Holocaust was quote, “God’s advanced punishment of the chosen people for the savagery they are committing today against the innocent Palestinian children and civilians.”

You called Saddam Hussein a martyr after Iran fired missiles at American troops in Iraq, and you liked the tweet that compared Jews to monkeys.

Now, I appreciate what you said in your opening statement about one of the areas of greatness about the United States is that we allow freedom of speech and that we do have different views.

But that is different than representing the U.S. Government and the official policies of the U.S. Government, particularly overseas.

So how do you assure this committee, how do you assure Americans of all religions and backgrounds both here and in Kuwait, if you are confirmed, that you will represent them equally, especially after those kinds of comments that you have made?

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you, Senator Shaheen, for these important points that I want to clarify.

First, I would like to mention first that I totally condemned what happened on October 7, all kinds of abuses. What happened—the conversation between me and your staff was, like, that I was not aware of some—that I have not seen myself stop.

But I told them clearly I clearly condemn all kinds of abuses, and October 7 was a horrible day and a tragic day, and all the atrocities that happened after is because of that day.

Now, let me be clear. As the mayor of my city, in February 2022, the second month I assumed the office, I passed a resolution that was passed unanimously to condemn antisemitism after the attack on the Jewish synagogue in Texas, and the Jewish community leaders came to me and thanked me and they said to the news that this is the only city that passed a resolution without them asking us to do so.

So that is how I represent people in my official capacity. Some of these social media posts were during my—as a private citizen because I became the mayor in 2022, and I can assure you that the media was biased in translating these posts.

They were misinterpreted. They were taken out of context, and I am happy to go over them like I did with your staff and others to explain.

In fact, there were some responses, even though I acknowledge I used between 2010 to 2020 as a private citizen to acknowledge every comment even if it is directed to me.

It does not mean that I agree with it, but as I was going through the comments there was a comment that says you can say this in your country but not in this country. It was not translated by the media because they wanted to selectively make it look like I acknowledge the comment.

But in fact, if you translate the responses they will clearly indicate that I was against that. Yes, it was a bad habit to acknowledge every comment.

Every post I had from 2010 to 2020 I used to acknowledge. That is a bad habit that I had. I agree.

When it comes to Saddam, I was angry in the day of January 7, 2020, when our military bases were attacked by the Iranian and there was no response. I understand the President came out to say that they informed us before so they wanted to have some credibility.

But before I heard that I was angry that our military bases were attacked without a response, and in a moment of anger I complimented Saddam because he kept Iran in check and he—probably that is the only positive thing he did in his life.

He was—no question he was a dictator. He committed a lot of crimes including the invasion of Kuwait, and if that description in a moment of anger offended anybody I am willing to apologize, especially to the Kuwaiti people.

I am not very adamant about it, and like I said, probably the only positive thing he did is to stop the spread of the Iranian regime ideology in the Middle East.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, Mr. Ghalib, I am in politics. I understand the press does not always accurately represent what we say.

However, that does not explain the comments you made to my staff nor the direct quotes from your hometown news outlet about sexual violence on October the 7th.

The fact that you represented to my staff that there was no documented evidence of that just shows to me a lack of recognition of what was going on, and as I said, as a private citizen it is fine for you to have those views.

I do not agree with them. I think they are abhorrent, but those are your views. But it is very different when you are an ambassador representing the United States of America, particularly in a country that Saddam Hussein invaded when he was the dictator in Iraq. For you to call him a martyr is unacceptable.

Mr. GHALIB. Well, thank you, Senator.

Again, let me just explain that I condemned all the atrocities and abuses that happened on October 7. The only reason I did that, and I think it was in front of the protest in front of my office, is because President Biden in a statement talked about beheaded babies and stuff, and I totally—

Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Ghalib, I do not want to hear your blaming President Biden or anybody else for those statements. I am out of time.

And I am sure that my colleagues on the panel will also give you an opportunity to further explain your statements. Thank you.

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Ricketts.

Senator RICKETTS. Well, again, congratulations to all of our nominees and your willingness to serve our great nation, and your families who also serve alongside you as you serve our nation. So thank you to them as well.

Across the world—I am going to pick up a theme here from Senator Shaheen—across the world antisemitic violence is surging at levels we have not seen in decades. The combat antisemitism movement recorded 13,339 antisemitic incidents worldwide between October 7, 2023, and October 1, 2025.

Synagogues have been vandalized in Berlin, Warsaw, and Rouen. In Manchester worshippers were murdered while observing Yom Kippur.

Two Israeli embassy staffers were killed here in Washington, DC, in May, and Jewish students have been physically attacked across college campuses for expressing their support for Israel.

This is a global crisis. We cannot tolerate antisemitism. President Trump's vision for the Middle East is one of historic progress, a vision rooted in peace, stability, and the inclusion of the Jewish state as a legitimate and permanent partner in the region. If we do not combat and stamp out antisemitism, I fear, for this vision.

Mayor Ghalib, in 2023 you refused to condemn a local candidate who compared Israel's actions to the Holocaust. Do you believe it is appropriate to equate Israel, a democrat ally—a democratic ally defending itself from terrorism with a Nazi regime that systematically murdered 6 million Jews?

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you, Senator, for that important question, and I actually wanted to clarify that point for Senator Shaheen, if you would like to hear that.

That person is a volunteer in the planning commission. I did not—he is not an official employee with the city. He had been volunteering for years even with the prior administration, and I clearly said to the media that I condemned what he said, and I do not agree with him.

But it is a volunteer position that they meet once a month, and I, as a mayor, my position is an honorary position because it is a city manager system. Everything I do is subject to approval by the city council.

I do not have the absolute power to fire or hire without the approval of the city council. But I clearly told the news that I do not agree with what he said, and I totally condemned that.

Senator RICKETTS. Another threat that we are facing is communist China.

Mr. Christensen, Bangladesh's military to military cooperation with communist China is growing. Communist China recently refurbished a strategic Bangladeshi submarine base to accommodate both warships and submarines, and just this month Bangladesh's interim government has reportedly approved a plan to acquire up to 20 Chinese made J-10 fighter jets. They will also acquire new surface to air missiles and long range radars.

If finalized, this sale would lock Dhaka into a decades long financial and strategic relationship with the Chinese defense industry.

If you are confirmed, how would you engage with Bangladesh's military and political leadership to discourage further reliance on Chinese platforms, promote greater transparency in their defense and procurement process?

Mr. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Senator, for that important question.

I share your concern about Chinese influence across South Asia, and if confirmed I would engage with the Bangladeshi government and the military to clearly articulate the risks from Chinese activity, involvement with their military activities in their maritime domain and in their critical infrastructure, as well as highlight the opportunities and benefits that come with a closer partnership with the United States, especially a closer partnership between our militaries.

Senator RICKETTS. This hearing here comes as the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has just advanced the Think Twice Act yesterday by voice vote.

This bipartisan legislation requires a comprehensive strategy to dissuade countries like Bangladesh from purchasing Chinese weapons. It is critical that we get this bill across the finish line so we can combat Beijing's growing influence through arms sales.

So, Mr. Christensen, I hope that we can provide you that as one of the tools when you are working with the Bangladeshi government. What are other things that we can do?

What are our alternatives we have to the Chinese defense sales in South Asia that you would employ as ambassador?

Mr. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Senator, for that important question.

One of the things that we can do through our U.S. military groups is also highlight some of the allied systems that might be more affordable for a country like Bangladesh that may not be able to afford the premier U.S. military systems, as well as encourage their interoperability with other platforms as we conduct additional exercises with them.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Christensen.

I also might note that you mentioned Omaha in your opening statement, along with Dhaka, and that you previously had been at the United States Strategic Command, so I hope you enjoyed your stay in my home State while you were there.

Mr. CHRISTENSEN. We loved it, Senator.

Senator RICKETTS. Great. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. That is the right answer.

[Laughter.]

Senator RISCH. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bozell, in February of this year President Trump made the legally and morally absurd claim that the government of South Africa was engaged in genocide against Afrikaners there, and if confirmed you, of course, would be our Ambassador to South Africa.

So I have a pretty straightforward question. Do you agree that that claim was absurd?

Mr. BOZELL. Thank you, Senator, for that question.

My answer to you is this. If you were to talk to those people who are involved, they fear—

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Bozell, I am sorry. Genocide is a legally defined issue.

No, no, no. It is not a question of someone's impression. There is a legal definition for it. To your knowledge, has the State Department legal advisor concluded that the government of South Africa is engaged in genocide?

Mr. BOZELL. Senator, I do not know that answer but—

Senator VAN HOLLEN. But you should.

Mr. BOZELL. But Senator—

Senator VAN HOLLEN. No, it is a straightforward question. I am not going to—it is a straightforward question. There is a legal definition of genocide. I want to know if you agree that that is an absurd claim made by the President of the United States.

Mr. BOZELL. Senator, I am not a lawyer, so I cannot address it that way.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. The President, of course, is reported to be engaged right now in reducing the number of refugees that can come into the United States to something around 7,500 and that the overwhelming majority of those would be Afrikaner—white South Africans.

That, in my view, is a gross—a gross misuse of our policies. Do you agree that we should not have a refugee policy—admission policy that is based on race?

Mr. BOZELL. Senator, in South Africa—

Senator VAN HOLLEN. No. Again, it is a straight—I am asking you if we should have a refugee admission policy based on race. Again, it is a simple question, sir.

Mr. BOZELL. Senator, I am trying to answer it.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Yes or no, should we have one based on race?

Mr. BOZELL. In South Africa you have thousands of attacks that have taken place against white farmers. They fear for their lives. What the President is saying is that they can come to the United States as refugees if they fear for their lives.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Right. That is not an answer to my question. There is a legal criteria for people being admitted to the United States.

My question was that based on reports—very credible reports—the Trump administration is talking about making a cap worldwide of refugees and making almost all of them Afrikaners, white South Africans.

I know you do not want to answer the question. That sounds like a race based policy.

Mr. BOZELL. Senator, I cannot answer it. I am sorry. I cannot answer the question. I am not privy to that. I do not know the answer.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Do you agree—

Mr. BOZELL. I do not know the answer about caps.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Let me ask you this. This is a question. Apart from South Africa do you believe we should have a race based refugee admissions policy, yes or no?

Mr. BOZELL. I believe that in South Africa white Afrikaners are—

Senator VAN HOLLEN. No, that was not my question. You are going to be a representative of the United States overseas if you are confirmed.

Mr. BOZELL. But my focus, Senator—

Senator VAN HOLLEN. All right. Let me go on.

I want to—the whole issue of South Africa is not new to you and back in the 1980s I happened to be a staff member on this committee when this committee passed the comprehensive anti-apartheid legislation, sanctions against South Africa.

As I look at your comments from that period you were not supportive of that effort. Is that a fair characterization of your statement? I am being very broad.

Mr. BOZELL. I am not aware of what you did, Senator, but I can tell you what our position was as conservatives back in the 1980s.

ANC and Nelson Mandela at that time were aligned with the Soviet Union, which was the biggest threat to peace in the world and the mortal enemy of the United States. As such, we were in opposition.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. OK.

Mr. BOZELL. I think, Senator, at the same time, it is an extraordinary evolution that 10 years later, approximately, when the wall came down and that association ended so too did the relationship that the conservative movement had with Nelson Mandela.

If I am asked today who do I think is the most revered person in South Africa, who do I have the most respect for, it would be Nelson Mandela.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. OK, because you have criticized others for what you call sort of the glorification of Nelson Mandela, as you know, so it is interesting to hear—

Mr. BOZELL. I did then.

Senator VAN HOLLEN [continuing]. That statement today.

Let me just say in closing, you know, I think at that time you worked with then Senator Jesse Helms to have a hearing that actually objected to the Reagan administration's decision to send an emissary to meet with the ANC.

That was after this committee on a bipartisan basis led by Senator Lugar passed the sanctions bill. I think you probably were very strongly opposed to that bill, but in my view that bill was one of the great things this committee did on a bipartisan basis, and that helped bring apartheid to an end.

And people who oppose that have to live with the idea that there could still be an apartheid regime in South Africa today but for that legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Van Hollen.

Senator Lee.

Senator LEE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks to each of you for your willingness to serve.

Mr. Bozell, let us start with you. One of the many challenges we face on the world stage today involves critical minerals, critical materials from all over the place and some of this relates to mining.

Some of it relates to processing. But we have got a large geopolitical adversary, China, that has tried to establish its own form of hegemony. We are at a corporate player operating within the United States as such.

It would be in violation of all kinds of antitrust laws with both civil and criminal ramifications. It is a little bit different when that is a foreign sovereign nation.

Meanwhile, South Africa, the country where you will be serving should you be confirmed here, is a mineral rich nation with significant capacity in terms of mining and also in terms of processing.

The U.S., of course, has an interest in maintaining clear supply chains and in competing more effectively in the processing domain while South Africa—mineral wealth can drive economic development within the country.

So I think we both have a lot to gain by a strategic partnership when it comes to those matters. What role do you see minerals, particularly when it comes to processing of minerals, playing in the near to intermediate term future in terms of the U.S.-South Africa relationship?

Mr. BOZELL. Thank you, Senator, for that question because it is very important.

South Africa has some of the greatest reserves of some of the most important minerals in the world. It has 89 percent of the reserves of platinum groups. It has 70 percent of the reserves of magnesium, 44 percent of the reserves of chromium, and all manner of other things.

What has been happening is that China has been using unfair business practices to make deals with the South Africans to take their raw minerals, buy them, send them to China, refine them, and increase their value dramatically and increase the control that China has on these critical reserves that the United States needs.

What we propose to do is to allow South Africa to process and to enrich their own minerals. The way that has to happen is through a partnership with the United States.

There is right now—as an example, there is a company from Indiana called ReElement Technologies. It is working with a South African company, Novare I believe it is called, with a \$100 million investment in a plant that will do just that.

Now, what happens at the end of the day? At the end of the day, both sides are winners because we get a great investment and great investments, and the South Africans get to have the refined minerals that they can sell at a much higher price.

There are challenges, however, in this and they have to be addressed. The electrical grid in South Africa is a huge problem. Eskom is—it has been a combination of poor management, infrastructure collapsing, and corruption and theft.

That system, they are now doing what is called load shedding, I think it is called, where there is rolling blackouts or brownouts in the country.

It is very difficult for an American company to think, you know, I want to bring a lot of assets and invest if I cannot turn the lights on.

So that has to be addressed.

Senator LEE. Right. Processing is certainly an energy intensive endeavor and cannot be done if you are constantly losing power. But yes, you make some great points there and particularly if those jobs can stay in South Africa—

Mr. BOZELL. Correct.

Senator LEE [continuing]. That is great for South Africa's economy on many, many levels.

Mr. BOZELL. And Senator, to expand on that, the problem that we have is China brings in its workers and takes out its workers.

The United States hires South Africans, and that is why 250,000 South Africans are now employed because of American businesses. It could rise dramatically, and that, if I am confirmed as ambassador, that is one of the messages that I will be taking.

Senator LEE. Thank you. That is helpful.

Now, as you know, South Africa, on a different note, is leading the case in the International Court of Justice against Israel for genocide and also making the case publicly on many occasions that what happens in Israel is akin to apartheid.

Now, this carries special significance given that it is South Africa and South Africa's own experience with that. It seems to me that this is missing some points.

I mean, there are some vast differences that make this rather unlike what South Africa experienced, including the fact that you have got Arab Israelis among whom are Muslims, Christians, and a number of Druze who are full citizens of Israel.

I mean, it seems rather unlike apartheid to me. How would you use your role as the U.S. Ambassador to South Africa to help stand up for our ally Israel in that regard?

Mr. BOZELL. Senator, thank you for that. It is important. What South Africa did in leading the charge against Israel in the International Court of Justice was an injustice.

It is going to be a top priority because the President has made it a top priority, and the President has told me it is a top priority to do something about that, to get South Africa not just on that issue but there are other issues.

For example, just recently South Africa engaged in naval exercises with Iran, the archenemy of Israel. That was completely unnecessary to do unless South Africa is making a decision to go in a very, very dangerous direction.

If confirmed, I will be taking the President's message to them that we find it intolerable that they would work against American national interests.

Our alliance with Israel is iron clad. They are one of our greatest friends in the world. The President is going to stand by Israel, and that means we have to address this with South Africa.

Senator LEE. Thank you. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Lee.

Senator ROSEN.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Chair Risch and Ranking Member Shaheen, for holding this hearing.

Thank you for the witnesses for being here today.

I want to spend my time speaking to—on Mr. Ghalib and then to some other issues that we have, particularly in Nevada.

But building on Senator Shaheen's comments, as the co-founder and co-chair of the bipartisan Senate Task Force for Combating Antisemitism I do want to take a moment to focus on what you have said.

As an elected official you had a responsibility to work with your constituents to eliminate hatred from communities—all hatred from communities—but instead you chose to inflame divisions and traffic in antisemitism.

You liked a Facebook comment comparing Jews to monkeys. You characterized leaders you do not like as becoming Jewish.

As mayor you failed to comment after one of your political appointees suggested the Holocaust was quote, "advance punishment," end quote, for the war in Gaza, and you denied that Hamas used sexual violence as a weapon of war on October 7.

Now, you can disagree with the Israeli government, but peddling antisemitism in such a public manner as an elected official, as a community leader, is beyond the pale.

Given these other statements I will not be supporting your nomination. I urge my colleagues to do the same, and if you are confirmed I want you to remember this, sir.

You will be an ambassador for the United States of America, and thus, as ambassador we must show respect to everyone. You must lead in a way that shows respect and commands respect in return. We will be watching to see if that happens.

Now, I am going to move on to something that is extremely important to my State of Nevada, visa processing.

You are smiling. You know where this is going because, you know, Nevada is known for being a top tourist destination.

Of course, so many beautiful places in the United States and around the world, but Nevada's economy relies on travelers who come to our State from around the world for conventions, trade shows, world class entertainment events, and I have to say three time WNBA champs. There you go.

But this year the business and professional events industry will employ over 285,000 Nevadans and generate more than \$43 billion in direct spending statewide.

Therefore, Nevada relies on reasonable visa interview and processing wait times. So while the State Department has made significant progress in reducing visitor visa wait times in recent years, we know there is more to do.

So, Ms. Namdar, as the U.S. prepares to host a decade of major global events in both leisure and business and travel with Olympics coming and so many others, all of this plays a major role in our economy.

And so I want to ask you—I have a couple other questions on this so, briefly, if you would mention how are you going to ensure those reasonable wait times for U.S. visas and specifically what goals will you set for the Bureau of Consular Affairs in 2025 for business and tourist visa interviews and processing? My State depends on it and so many others.

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. Thank you for the question, Senator.

I think your statements are valid, of course. We want to make sure that processing times are as low as humanly possible.

I am not yet in the role. I can promise you when and if confirmed I will look into making everything as efficient as I possibly can.

Senator ROSEN. Will you commit to coming to my office and talking about what we are seeing in Nevada with sports, tourism, entertainment, travel, and maybe we can work on a few of those?

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. I am happy to come speak with you, yes.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you.

I am going to move on then and ask you some more questions because on Wednesday Joel Rayburn's nomination advanced out of this committee with my support.

Some people have said you believe you can be dual hatted as the senior bureau official at NEA and the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs until Mr. Rayburn is confirmed and makes his way to Foggy Bottom. Again, he was just passed out of committee. I supported him.

Given the enormous responsibility for both roles, I do not believe it is in the taxpayer's interest to have you overseeing both bureaus. They are so important.

So you are nominated for one role and one role only. So will you commit to only fulfilling the role you are nominated for, if confirmed?

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. Thank you for the question, Senator.

I mean, I think that is a hypothetical. I do not think that anybody has asked me to do that at this point, and frankly, I have not—

Senator ROSEN. So you will commit to just doing the role that you are confirmed for?

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. I am going to do whatever the Secretary of State and the President of the United States ask me to do. If they ask me to serve in both capacities as an interim until they—

Senator ROSEN. We are confirming you for one role.

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. Yes, ma'am.

Senator ROSEN. We have the advice and consent. You will be confirmed, hired for this job—nominated by the Administration, hired for the job by the U.S. Senate and this committee. I voted for someone to be in the other job, asking you if you will do the job you are confirmed for.

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. Of course I will do the job that I am confirmed for, and I will help the Administration in any way that I can until the nominee for that position is also confirmed.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you.

I have some questions for the record about Afghan refugees who helped us in the war in Afghanistan.

I will submit those for the record, talking about the Special Immigrant Visa program. It is really important.

And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Rosen.

Senator McCormick.

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member.

Thank you to our witnesses today for your willingness to serve.

Mr. Ghalib, I was a member of the 82d Airborne Division that actually helped oust Saddam Hussein from Kuwait.

You referred to Saddam Hussein sympathetically as a martyr, which has some significance given that you would be the United States' highest ranking diplomat in Kuwait, a country that was invaded by Saddam.

How do you justify calling Saddam Hussein a martyr to us but also to the people of Kuwait?

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you, Senator.

I explained earlier that post was in January 7, 2020. I was a private citizen before. It was not in my official capacity, and it was the day when the American military bases in Iraq were attacked by Iran.

I was angry that we did not respond to the Iranian regime, and so in a moment of anger I recalled and complimented Saddam Hussein for keeping the Iranian regime in check, and I said earlier that probably that is—in his career that would be the only positive thing he did and the only thing I would agree with.

No doubt he was a dictator. No doubt the invasion of Kuwait was a crime, was a violation of the international law, and for those who are offended by that and those who suffered from Saddam or lost loved ones I apologize.

I am not very adamant about describing him like that, but like I said, it was a moment of anger. I know he did a lot of atrocities to his people.

Senator MCCORMICK. OK. Good. Let me move on to my second question.

As a mayor you repeatedly targeted American ally Israel through your support of a boycott, divest, and sanctions movement against Israel and you called for Israelis to, quote, “leave the land,” unquote, thereby supporting the end of the state of Israel.

So my question to you, given the role you are being nominated for, do you accept President Trump's view that Israel is and should be the national home of the Jewish people?

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you, Senator, for that question.

Let me make it clear that the BDS movement resolution was drafted by a Jewish attorney who is part of the—

Senator MCCORMICK. The question is do you agree or do you disagree with President Trump's view that Israel is and should be the national home of the Jewish people? Just a yes or no.

Mr. GHALIB. Well, thank you, Senator. I think at this point we have a peace plan that everybody in the region agreed on.

Senator MCCORMICK. So there was no yes or no. You did not—do you agree with the President's position or not?

Mr. GHALIB. I think everybody—we can coexist in the region, and that is the answer that everybody has the right to exist now. The—

Senator MCCORMICK. Well, no, that is not the President's position. Do you agree with the President?

Mr. GHALIB. I trust the President's policies, and I will support his policies.

Senator MCCORMICK. OK. Let me move to my third question, and I want you to take a minute and really try to explain this to me.

In 2025, so this is this year, you liked a Facebook comment referring to Jews as, quote, “monkeys,” unquote, who levy taxes on the, quote, “the air we breathe,” unquote.

Now, I heard you say before that you have this habit that you acknowledge all of the posts but I do not totally understand that. So could you please provide an explanation for the rationale of liking this comment, and do you agree with that comment?

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you, Senator, for that question.

First of all, let us correct the misinformation. It is very disturbing. That comment was when I was a private citizen about 6 or 7 years ago.

It was not this year. It was under a post that I posted as a private citizen and part of my bad habits of acknowledging reading those posts.

But in the responses I told the guy, you cannot say this in the United States of America. You cannot say—the media did not translate that response. So it was not in 2025. That is misinformation.

And just by making assumptions and judging my intentions based on social media posts in the past I would recommend that you look at the facts and judge my actions.

Senator MCCORMICK. I am asking for the facts. So would you like to clarify? Do you agree with that statement? What—

Mr. GHALIB. No, definitely I totally disagree.

Senator MCCORMICK. And how would you respond to the fact that you liked it in the moment? What is your response to that specific comment now?

Mr. GHALIB. At that moment I responded that this is not appropriate to say this, but in my official capacity I responded in 2021–22 in the second month of assuming the mayor office by passing a resolution to condemn antisemitism and that was complimented by the Jewish community.

That is how I perform in my official capacity, and I represent everyone. And at the end, I am a Semite. The Arabs are Semite. Do we read history? How can we be anti-Semite?

And I think, like I said, judge my actions and not my intentions because we have to lay down the facts. You know, Senator Shaheen earlier said that I hired someone after he said—no, that guy has been serving in the city for the past—

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you. I am out of time. Thank you.

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Murphy.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bozell, I wanted to give you a second chance to answer a question that Senator Van Hollen put to you. I do not want to litigate the specific question of the persecution of the Afrikaner people. That is a policy that the Administration has announced that I understand you will support.

But Senator Van Hollen asked you a really simple question—like, a layup question, and it is concerning to me that you could not give an easy, straight answer.

He asked you, should we have a race based refugee admissions policy as a nation. In other words, do you support having a refugee admissions policy that admits white refugees only?

So let me ask you that question again. I do not want to get into the specifics of the Afrikaner issue. Do you support having a ref-

ugee admissions policy in this country that only admits white refugees?

Mr. BOZELL. Senator, I do not make that policy. I simply—

Senator MURPHY. Well, but it is really important. But I think this is a—if I were to ask this question of virtually any nominee to be an ambassador prior to this panel that would be an easy layup answer.

No, of course—of course, we do not support having a refugee policy where we only admit white people. So why cannot you give me your personal view on that?

Mr. BOZELL. Because, Senator, I am here to serve America and to do what the President is asking me to do. I will be following the executive order of February.

Senator MURPHY. Would you support reinstating laws in this country to only allow white people to vote?

Mr. BOZELL. Senator, I am going to serve as Ambassador to South Africa and I am going to focus on that.

Senator MURPHY. You will not share your personal views on whether it is right or wrong to reinstitute discriminatory policies in this country to prevent black people from voting?

Mr. BOZELL. Senator, my personal views are irrelevant. I am serving here to do what the President is asking me to do in South Africa.

Senator MURPHY. That is just simply not true. The whole reason that you are appearing before this committee is because your personal views, your history, is absolutely relevant to your fitness to serve.

We would not have this process if your personal views were not relevant. That is pretty stunning that you will not share your views not only on whether we should have a refugee admissions process that is race based but you will not share your personal views on whether we should reimpose discriminatory treatment against black Americans.

That is absolutely relevant to your qualifications to serve and your refusal to answer it I hope is something that every member of this committee will think about.

Mr. Ghalib, I do not think you are qualified to serve in this role, and I think that you have dug your hole deeper today in response to Senator McCormick's pretty simple question.

You refused to support maintaining Israel as a home for the Jewish people. I just do not know how we send an ambassador to the Middle East that does not support protecting Israel as a home for the Jewish people. I also just want to make sure that you are being—

Mr. GHALIB. [Off mic.]

Senator MURPHY. Well, I mean, Senator McCormick asked—you can answer it again but Senator McCormick asked you that question three different times, and you had ample opportunity to state that you believe that Israel should be protected as a home for the Jewish people.

Mr. GHALIB. Can I clarify that now?

Senator MURPHY. I mean, I think it is pretty important to understand your views on this. It is pretty stunning that you were not

able to answer that question three times when asked by Senator McCormick.

Mr. GHALIB. Well, I supported the President's plan which means that there would be a solution.

Senator MURPHY. It does not matter to me whether you support the President's plan. Again, this idea that your personal views do not matter is ridiculous. Do you believe—do you believe—that Israel should be protected as a home for the Jewish people?

Mr. GHALIB. I believe that, and I believe it can be a home for the Jewish and the Arabs and the Muslims and the Christian as well, and that is why it is a diverse land for the three major religions.

I think they can coexist, all the nations in the Middle East, based on the peace plan of President Trump that I support strongly.

Senator MURPHY. I just want to ask you to present something to the committee. You have been asked questions today about your refusal to condemn this outrageous statement by a member of your city government.

The statement, again, is the Holocaust was God's advanced punishment of the chosen people for the savagery that they have committed against the innocent Palestinian children and civilians.

You were asked to comment on this. You refused to comment on it. I think that is disqualifying in and of itself. But in earlier questioning you said that you did condemn it at the time. We have seen no evidence of that.

Mr. GHALIB. You know, Senator, I—

Senator MURPHY. Is there evidence that you condemned that at the time?

Mr. GHALIB. I did. I did tell the media that I do not agree with him, and I condemned. They were concerned about disciplining—

Senator MURPHY. And there is evidence of that? You could present this committee with those media reports?

Mr. GHALIB. You know, I would, and I say it now. Let me be clear. I condemned that, and I disagree with him. Their concerns was to why did I not fire him. He is a volunteer in the planning—

Senator MURPHY. I am simply asking you we have not seen any evidence that you publicly condemned that post. You have claimed that you did in a public way.

Mr. GHALIB. I did. I did disagree with him.

Senator MURPHY. I am simply asking you to submit that information for the record because we have not seen that.

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you. All right. Thank you.

Senator MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator Murphy.

Senator KAINE.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Mayor, I want to ask you about another one before moving on to other witnesses.

In a Facebook post that you put up in November 2023 you praised the actions of Houthi rebels in hijacking and kidnapping the crew of the cargo ship the Galaxy Leader and noted, quote, "the kidnapped ship does not fly the Israeli flag but it is painted completely with it blue and white colors only," close quote.

Do you continue to support actions by the Houthis, which—who are a U.S. designated foreign terrorist organization in kidnapping innocent merchant sailors and disrupting shipping in the Red Sea?

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you, Senator, for that important question.

You know, if you go over my social media since 2011 you would know how strong opponent and how much I disagree with the Houthi to the point where I cannot travel to Yemen. I mean, they are blacklist.

I mean, it is so——

Senator KAINE. But so are you are you denying that you posted a Facebook post celebrating the kidnapping by the Houthis of the particular crew of this ship the Galaxy Leader?

Mr. GHALIB. I do not think it is a celebration. This is assumptions that is making. I disagree with attacking the ships and disrupting——

Senator KAINE. But are you denying that you posted what I just read to you?

Mr. GHALIB. I think there was a post, but it seems like it is taken out of context. Maybe I commented on——

Senator KAINE. All right. Well, I will share—I will share it with the colleagues before we take up your nomination in committee.

Mr. BOZELL, I also just want to echo what Senator Murphy said. It is an easy question. It is a layup when you are asked the question of should our refugee programs be race based.

Our Constitution and the 14th Amendment says all persons—not all citizens, all persons in this country are entitled to equal protection of the laws.

You will take an oath—you will take an oath to support that Constitution should you be confirmed. It is not a hard question, and your unwillingness to answer it is very troubling.

I want to ask you this. Are you aware of the Freedom Plus Party in South African politics?

Mr. BOZELL. No, Senator.

Senator KAINE. OK. I will tell you. The Freedom Plus Party is an Afrikaner political party that has the most representation of Afrikaners in the South African parliament, and that is part of the National Unity Government.

It was a party that used to be in opposition but since 2024 has been part of the National Unity Government. The Afrikaners that President Trump believes are being persecuted are actually represented by a party that made the decision to join the National Unity Government, and I think that is something you should pay some attention to.

Ms. Namdar, I want to return to the questions that were being asked by Senator Rosen about visas—really, really important work.

During a hearing here on July 16, Michael Rigas, who is the deputy secretary for Management and Resources, was asked a number of questions about how RIFs and firings were affecting the State Department and in particular were affecting the issue of consular affairs and visa issues.

We asked based on these RIFs who would absorb these functions. You would agree with me that passport and visa fraud prevention is very important to our national security, correct?

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. Thank you for the question, Senator.

Of course, all of our visa and passport services are important to national security.

Senator KAINE. And do you know, as you are nominated for this position, who is going to absorb the functions that have been made more complicated by the significant RIFs within the visa and consular area?

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. Thank you for the question, Senator.

As you know, I am not yet confirmed, so I am not privy to the information that you are citing. I am very happy to look into it when and if I am lucky enough to be confirmed.

Senator KAINE. Let me ask you another question. My staff has heard informally—I have a lot of State Department folks that live in Virginia, so we get a lot of stuff coming in over the transom—that the State Department is breaking a long standing practice and no longer evaluating dual citizens for wrongful detention determinations under the Levinson Act.

Do you know what the Levinson Act is?

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. I am not familiar, sir, but I am not—I have not heard anything about what you have just stated.

Senator KAINE. The Levinson Act was signed into law in late 2020, and it provides a framework for the Secretary of State to review cases to make a wrongful detention determination for U.S. nationals, and the Act does not allow for a distinction between a U.S. national and a U.S. national who has dual citizenship.

Have you heard anything about the State Department making a determination to no longer pursue wrongful detention cases for U.S. nationals who also have dual citizenship in other nations?

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. Thank you for the question.

I am not familiar with what you have cited. I am happy to look into it when and if confirmed.

Senator KAINE. If confirmed, will you ensure that the United States follows the Levinson Act?

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. If confirmed, I will ensure that I try to comply with all laws.

Senator KAINE. And you will work to ensure that the Administration does not discriminate against U.S. nationals who also have dual citizenship?

Ms. NAMDARKHAN. I do not believe this Administration would discriminate against anybody, and I will work to uphold all laws.

Senator KAINE. Thank you for that.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Cruz, welcome.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Ghalib, I am concerned that your stated public positions are markedly in conflict with the views of President Trump and with the positions of the United States. So I want to spend some time talking about your views.

Let us talk first about boycott, divestment, and sanctions of Israel. During your tenure as mayor the Hamtramck city council passed a resolution supporting the boycott of Israel, divestment from Israel, and sanctions of Israel.

Do you support boycotting Israel?

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you, Senator, for that question.

So as a mayor my position is an honorary position, and it is a city manager system in our government—city government.

So the Jewish Voice for Peace group drafted that resolution, came and convinced the city council to unanimously vote for that.

Senator CRUZ. So you voted for it?

Mr. GHALIB. I did not vote for it because I only vote if there is a tie. So it was not my idea. It was not my initiative. It was the Jewish Voice group.

Senator CRUZ. Did you support it at the time?

Mr. GHALIB. I did not support it. I did not vote for it. It was not my idea.

Senator CRUZ. Did you oppose it? Did you oppose it?

Mr. GHALIB. I did not have to vote at the time. So it—

Senator CRUZ. Do you support boycotting Israel right now?

Mr. GHALIB. Senator, we do not have any companies that deal with Israel in our city. So I—

Senator CRUZ. OK. With respect, you are not answering my question.

Mr. GHALIB. I do not—

Senator CRUZ. As a policy matter do you support BDS? Do you support boycotting, divesting, and sanctioning?

Mr. GHALIB. We do not—

Senator CRUZ. Under your leadership the city you were leading became the first American city in the whole country to pass a BDS resolution, and I am asking if you support the policy that you put in place.

Mr. GHALIB. I did not put it in place, and I do not support it but it was, like I said, drafted by—

Senator CRUZ. So your testimony here today is you do not support BDS? You do not support boycotting Israel, divesting from Israel, or sanctioning Israel.

Is that correct?

Mr. GHALIB. Yes, sir. It was drafted by a Jewish attorney, voted unanimously by the city council. It was not my idea.

Senator CRUZ. All right. Let us move then to the Abraham Accords. In August 2020, you posted harsh criticism of President Trump's push to normalize relations between Israel and the UAE. You said that it was a threat to stability and a cause for mourning.

Do you continue to oppose the Abraham Accords?

Mr. GHALIB. I do not recall writing that, Senator, but at the time, as you know, I was opposed to the President. Up until 2024 I was still not a supporter of President Trump until—

Senator CRUZ. So you opposed President Trump. My question is do you oppose the Abraham Accords?

Mr. GHALIB. No, Senator. I think there is a great opportunity at this time to have a growing momentum and to move with the President Trump peace plan, and there is a great opportunity that we can treat everybody fairly and accomplish regional stability, a long term, everlasting peace, and get everybody involved in this purpose.

Senator CRUZ. So in the same post you described Saddam Hussein as a martyr. Do you continue to believe Saddam Hussein was a martyr?

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you, Senator, for that question.

This is the third time I am asked, and as I said, I was a private citizen in 2020.

Senator CRUZ. I am just asking your views.

Mr. GHALIB. Yes, thank you. I will clarify that.

It was the day of January 7, 2020, when our military bases were attacked by Iran, and in a moment of anger because we did not respond I—

Senator CRUZ. So I asked you about today. Do you continue to believe Saddam Hussein was a martyr today?

Mr. GHALIB. Senator, I do not think that—no doubt that Saddam was a dictator, and I said earlier if this offended anybody who suffered from Saddam or lost a loved one I apologize about that.

Senator CRUZ. OK. So you are not answering my question. Do you believe today that Saddam Hussein was a martyr? That is a yes or no.

Mr. GHALIB. I mean, I can say no. It would not matter. He is in God's hand. He will get the treatment he deserves. I am not in judgment.

Senator CRUZ. All right. In August 2020, you posted that the Muslim Brotherhood was an inspiration. Do you continue to believe the Muslim Brotherhood is an inspiration?

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you, Senator.

I think a lot of my posts were written in Arabic and mistranslated. I believe that, you know, there is—it is an ideology. It is not just a group of people.

I disagree with a lot of things that they do. Some of them are extremists. Some of them are part of some governments in the Middle East. So I trust our government to do the research and—

Senator CRUZ. OK. Again, my question was simple and straightforward. Do you continue to believe the Muslim Brotherhood is an inspiration?

Mr. GHALIB. No, I am not part of it. I do not believe in that. But if anybody comes to—

Senator CRUZ. OK, but you did post it in 2020. Let me ask you how would you be able to serve as an ambassador if President Trump designates the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization?

I have legislation to do that. I believe it is likely the Trump administration will designate the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization. Hamas is the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine.

Mr. GHALIB. I would trust the President, and if it is designated I will be committed to implement President Trump's policies.

I am not—you know, I trust the President's policy, and if confirmed I will be implementing the policies of the Administration. I mean, I would not go against the President and his policies.

Senator CRUZ. Mr. Ghalib, I will say from your long standing public positions it appears you have a deep felt and passionate view about the Middle East, but it is a view that is in direct conflict with the policy positions of President Trump and this Administration.

I will point out also that—and you have been asked about this before, but it is really quite astonishing—that on Facebook you liked a post that called Jews monkeys for their own benefit.

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you, Senator, for that—

Senator CRUZ. Why would you like a post that calls Jews monkeys?

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you.

I explained that earlier. From 2010 to 2000—before I became the mayor I used to have a bad habit of acknowledging every post, every comment under my post. Does not mean that I agree with it, just acknowledging.

But there were a response under that that was not translated or interpreted that says you can say this in your country, but not in this country, which means that I did not agree with that post even though I acknowledged it.

I know it was a bad habit. But let me be clear, I do not agree with that statement, and I treat everybody with respect in my official capacity.

Senator CRUZ. And let us be clear, the statement that you liked said they are all monkeys for their own benefit. So every Jew is a monkey.

Mr. GHALIB. I do not agree with that statement, Senator, and the person who wrote it is mentally challenged in our community. He is well known. I used to have this idea of inclusivity in my past, you know, ideology. I changed in 2024. I changed even my party—you know, party.

Senator CRUZ. Mr. Ghalib, there may well be positions within the Trump administration that you are qualified to perform in that are unrelated to these issues that you have such passionate beliefs about.

I believe your beliefs are sincere. I believe that when you became the mayor of the first city in America to pass a BDS resolution it is because you believe in BDS.

I disagree with you on that. That is contrary to the policy of the U.S. Government, but you are entitled to have your own views.

Mr. GHALIB. But can I—

Senator CRUZ. What I do not understand is how you could possibly serve as a United States Ambassador for President Trump in the Middle East when you have passionate views including having been a vocal opponent of the Abraham Accords, the singular and most consequential accomplishment President Trump has negotiated, and your long standing views are to publicly oppose the Abraham Accords.

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you, Senator.

Let me be clear. I support the Abraham Accords, and I think there is a golden opportunity to get everybody involved in that.

And let me be clear. In February 2022, as the mayor the first thing I did is to pass a resolution to condemn antisemitism.

It is documented. That is what I perform in my official capacity. The other things—you know, people are making assumptions based, you know, trying to judge my intention.

Senator CRUZ. I am curious. Would a statement like all Jews are monkeys would that qualify as antisemitism?

Mr. GHALIB. Well, that is—somebody wrote it who is mentally challenged and—

Senator CRUZ. My question is does the statement all Jews are monkeys, does that qualify as antisemitism?

Mr. GHALIB. Definitely. I do not agree with it, Senator. I mean—

Senator CRUZ. OK. You are not answering my question.

Mr. GHALIB. It is definitely antisemitism, but clicking on it does not mean I endorse it. It is just acknowledging—

Senator CRUZ. Well, actually, like means exactly that. When you “like” something it means you like it.

Mr. GHALIB. No, Senator, every post since 2010, every comment—because I used to have, like, 10, 20 comments. I used to acknowledge it to read it but sometimes I would respond under it to oppose it, and there was a response here that was not translated by the media that says you cannot say this in your country. It was not translated. And I was—what I meant to Senator—

Senator CRUZ. But that is not disagreeing with the statement that all Jews are monkeys.

Mr. GHALIB. But let me be clear now. I disagree with that, and I—

Senator CRUZ. But you did not at the time.

Mr. GHALIB. You are making assumptions, sir.

Senator CRUZ. No, I am asking. I am not making an assumption. That is a question.

Mr. GHALIB. No, I did disagree at the time, and I still disagree.

Senator CRUZ. Did you disagree publicly? Did you say a word of disagreement or was your only public statement a “like” which is the universal method of saying you like something and agree with it?

Mr. GHALIB. Everybody who asked me I told them it does not mean I endorse it. It is just acknowledging reading it, but I am opposing that, and I make it clear now. I passed a resolution to condemn antisemitism in all forms or shape.

Senator CRUZ. So you mentioned earlier that the posts were in Arabic, and they have not been translated right. I have in my hands right now one of those Arabic posts on August 13, 2020, and I have the English translation.

Among other things you talk about—you talk about individuals who died in Egyptian prisons, and you said, quote, “they die to be etched on the pages of history, stained in positions that inspire generations and make millions of Brotherhood fans exposed to a global demonic campaign and unprecedented demonic media infliction. I have only seen such situations in the martyr Saddam Hussein and his companions. May God have mercy on them.”

Mr. GHALIB. Thank you, Senator, for that question. I was talking about standing firm for the cause of a person. Does not mean I agree with him. I am a strong advocate of democracy in the Middle East.

Yes, I was against the military coup, and I believe in democracy. That is the best value that we have, and we want everybody to enjoy that value in the Middle East.

So I was advocating for democracy in the Middle East. Does not mean that I support a certain group but I support democracy and—

Senator CRUZ. Well, as I said, I think your long standing views are directly contrary to the views and positions of President Trump and to the position of the United States.

I, for one, am not going to be able to support your confirmation, and I want to enter into the record this post in both the Arabic and English translation. I ask that it be entered into the record.

Senator LEE [presiding]. It will be entered into the record without objection.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to was not received at press time.]

Senator CRUZ. And look, I think the facts here are quite clear, and your longstanding position is directly contrary to that of the President's.

Mr. GHALIB. Senator, if confirmed I will be implementing President Trump's policies with no objections.

Thank you.

Senator LEE. I want to thank all of you for your patience today, your participation, the answers that you provided to the committee.

Before closing, I would like to ask unanimous consent to add any letters of support the committee may have received to the record and those will be admitted into the record, without objection.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to was not received at press time.]

Senator LEE. The hearing stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:20 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO MORA NAMDARKHAN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. As you work to ensure secure and efficient visa processing, how will you make sure that J-1 visas for seasonal workers continue to be issued in a reliable way?

Answer. As Secretary Rubio has said, a U.S. visa is a privilege, not a right. Each visa adjudication is a national security decision for which the adjudicator must take the time necessary to fully vet each applicant. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Bureau of Consular Affairs is mindful of the needs of U.S. sponsors when processing J-1 visas, while also fully vetting applicants to ensure that they do not pose any threat to the security of the United States as required by applicable law and Executive Orders, including the Immigration and Naturalization Act.

Question. If confirmed, what steps will you take to improve the visa process for foreign religious workers and ensure that it runs as smoothly as possible?

Answer. As Secretary Rubio has said, a U.S. visa is a privilege, not a right. Each visa adjudication is a national security decision for which the adjudication must take the time necessary to fully vet each applicant. If confirmed, my team and I stand ready to work with the Department of Homeland Security on any proposed solutions to this backlog in compliance with all applicable laws and Executive Orders, including but not limited to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO MORA NAMDARKHAN BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to providing requested briefings and information to the Committee on average 2 weeks after receiving a briefing or information request?

Answer. If confirmed, CA officials and I will work collaboratively with the Committee on all briefing requests, noting that the timing of briefings will depend on approval by the Bureau of Legislative Affairs and the length of time required to prepare any necessary materials.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to working with me and my office to resolve constituent needs as they arise?

Answer. If confirmed, CA officials and I will work collaboratively with the Committee on all such requests in accordance with the Department's protocols.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to immediately working to provide me and my office with any outstanding briefings pending before the Bureau?

Answer. If confirmed, CA officials and I will work collaboratively with the Committee on all briefing requests in accordance with the Department's procedures for handling such requests.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to only carrying out the duties of the position you were nominated for as Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs and not performing other duties at the State Department, either officially or unofficially?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to serving the American people as the Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Consular Affairs. I remain at the service of the President and the Secretary of State.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to providing me and my office with the guidance given to consular officers regarding social media screening of visa applicants?

Answer. If confirmed, CA officials and I will provide productive consultation on online presence review for visa applicants and work to respond to any request for documents in accordance with the Department's procedures for handling such requests.

Question. Given the changes in visa processing that have led to delays, how will you ensure that processing remains efficient and effective as the U.S. prepares for the World Cup in 2026 and the Olympics in 2028?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to ensure our consular teams are excellently prepared to meet the surge in visa demand, and also to assist American citizens who plan to attend events in Canada and Mexico. The same will hold true for the 2028 Olympics.

Question. How will you ensure that social media screening does not violate the digital privacy of minors' visa applicants?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure every prospective traveler to the United States undergoes extensive vetting, regardless of age. Prohibiting entry to the United States by those who might pose a threat to U.S. national security is key to protecting U.S. citizens at home. To the best of my understanding, at this time, the Department currently requests all F, M, and J visa applicants, including minors, to set their social media accounts to public. Parents or guardians must decide whether to comply with this request. Consular officers consider the totality of circumstances when assessing minors' online presence, credibility, and eligibility to receive a visa.

Question. Will you create set guidance for consular officers to follow when screening social media for comments made about U.S. public figures?

Answer. Visa applications are considered upon the totality of circumstances. Maintaining robust screening and vetting standards for visa applicants is a dynamic practice that must adapt to emerging threats to support legitimate travel and immigration to the United States while protecting American citizens and communities.

Question. If so, what will the guidance include?

Answer. Visa applications are considered upon the totality of circumstances. I understand that consular officers adjudicate each application for a U.S. visa based on the applicant's ability to credibly demonstrate his or her eligibility for the visa classification under U.S. law, including the INA. Visa procedures and policies are articulated in the Department's regulations, as well as internally in the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) and the Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH). The Department of State constantly reviews visa procedures and policies and implements appropriate changes to protect American communities and safeguard U.S. national security.

Question. How will the guidance be standardized to ensure fairness and that the totality of circumstances is considered when issuing a visa or revoking a current visa?

Answer. I understand that every visa decision is based on the consular officer's review of the individual application and finding of facts in the case. As I understand it, guidance is currently provided to consular sections worldwide via cables and updates to the Foreign Affairs Manual. Consular officers undergo rigorous training,

meet regularly, and use technological tools to ensure consistency. Consular managers review adjudications daily to enforce that consistency.

Question. What office will absorb the capabilities and functions of the Afghan visa processing office?

Answer. I understand that, without a consular presence in Afghanistan to carry out the required in-person visa interviews, the Department continues to prioritize and schedule visa interview appointments for Afghan SIV applicants who can travel outside of Afghanistan to appear at any immigrant visa-processing post. The Department seeks to complete processing of SIV cases while ensuring strict security safeguards and conducting all required vetting.

Question. Please provide a detailed description of how Afghan visa processing functions will continue within Consular Affairs and the Department overall.

Answer. I understand that the Department's authority to issue Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) to Afghan nationals under section 602(b) of the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, as amended, will continue until all visa numbers allocated under the Act are issued. The Bureau of Consular Affairs continues to process SIV applications at every stage of the process, including by transferring interview-ready cases to U.S. embassies and consulates with immigrant visa processing capabilities around the world where applicants are able to appear.

Question. What concrete steps will you take to support and protect Consular Affairs employees who may be targeted or doxed online?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure CA works closely with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security regarding any possible threats against an employee.

Question. How will you ensure that your employees feel safe conducting their official duties if they are experiencing attacks online or otherwise?

Answer. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Bureau of Consular Affairs takes seriously any report by an employee about safety and security. I understand that managers at passport agencies and consular sections abroad vigilantly monitor public interactions and alert Diplomatic Security colleagues the moment security is a question.

Question. Will you conduct an analysis of staffing gaps in the bureau due to the loss of personnel after the reduction in forces issued in July?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to continue reviewing CA's staffing posture in conjunction with Department leadership. I understand that CA conducted a review of functions performed by positions eliminated during the July 2025 reduction and reported that all essential consular functions continue uninterrupted. The Bureau is working toward filling critical staffing gaps through the continued onboarding that was excepted from the Federal hiring freeze.

Question. If so, how will you address staffing gaps to ensure that the core duties of Consular Affairs continue to be maintained?

Answer. I understand that the Bureau of Consular Affairs carefully allocates resources to ensure the welfare of U.S. citizens, securely issue passports on a timely basis, and vigorously vet aliens applying for visas. The Bureau continues to onboard staff to fill critical needs to meet the demand of U.S. citizens for passport services and onboard consular adjudicators for its most critical operations overseas. If confirmed, my staff and I will ensure a proactive review of resources and staffing in conjunction with Department leadership to make sure the priorities and demands for consular services are met.

RESPONSES TO FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MORA NAMDARKHAN BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. Do you commit to ensuring that the Department processes visas for Afghan citizens who served alongside U.S. forces and personnel, including Special Immigrant Visa and P1/P2 refugee applicants?

Answer. I understand that the Department's authority to issue Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) to Afghan nationals under section 602(b) of the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, as amended, will continue until all visa numbers allocated under the Act are issued. Under this statute, I commit to continue processing SIV applications in accordance with the law. Additionally, I note that P1/P2 refugee applicants are not processed by the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

Question. Do you believe that Afghan citizens who served alongside U.S. forces and personnel, including Special Immigrant Visa and P1/P2 refugee applicants should receive priority in terms of visa processing?

Answer. I understand that eligible Afghan SIV applicants currently receive priority in terms of visa processing, while noting that the Bureau of Consular Affairs does not process P1/P2 refugee applications. If confirmed, I commit to continue to prioritize applications from eligible Afghan SIV applicants while maintaining national security as our highest priority.

Question. Do you commit to working to issue guidance for how consular officers should screen social media for issuing visas?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I commit to working with the CA team to ensure that consular officers have the guidance and other tools they need to fully screen and vet all visa applicants.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MORA NAMDARKHAN BY SENATOR TIM KAINE

Question. Please confirm your understanding that the Levinson Act applies to all U.S. citizens who meet the criteria for wrongful detention abroad, regardless of whether they are dual nationals.

Answer. My understanding is that the Levinson Act applies to U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents with significant ties to the United States who meet the statutory criteria for wrongful detention abroad, under a totality of circumstances.

Question. If confirmed, will you ensure that the Administration will fully comply with the precepts of the Levinson Act and will not discriminate against dual nationals?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that all Bureau of Consular Affairs activities related to cases of wrongful detention abroad fully comply with U.S. law including the Levinson Act.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MORA NAMDARKHAN BY SENATOR CORY A. BOOKER

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to working with me and my office as needed to quickly resolve any constituent needs as they arise?

Answer. If confirmed, CA officials and I will work collaboratively with the Committee on all such requests in accordance with the Department's protocols for handling such requests.

Question. How many consular coned Foreign Service Officers were RIFed in July 2025?

Answer. As I was not in the Bureau of Consular Affairs in July 2025, I do not have this number.

Question. If confirmed, how do you plan to fill the gaps in capacity as a result of the State Department firing analysts in the Consular Affairs Fraud Prevention unit?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the staffing and capability of our Consular Affairs' Office of Fraud Prevention Programs to ensure we are upholding and improving the integrity of our immigration system.

Question. How many employees were in the Consular Affairs Fraud Prevention unit prior to July 11, 2025?

Answer. As I was not in the Bureau of Consular Affairs in July 2025, I do not have this number.

Question. How many employees are currently in the Consular Affairs Fraud Prevention unit?

Answer. If confirmed, I will review the staffing and capability of our Consular Affairs' Office of Fraud Prevention Programs.

Question. If confirmed, will it be a priority for you to ensure that there are Consular officers available to be rapidly deployed to areas where there may be emergencies or a needed boost in capacity to help American citizens abroad?

Answer. If confirmed, I will seek to ensure the bureau's ability to rapidly deploy consular officers to protect Americans overseas, respond to crisis situations, and support events like the World Cup that showcase American greatness.

Question. Did you know that two out of the three members of the Consular Rapid Response Team were fired on July 11, 2025?

Answer. As I was not in the Bureau of Consular Affairs in July 2025, I was not aware of this matter.

Question. If confirmed, how do you plan to fill the gaps created by the State Department's decision to reduce the Consular Rapid Response Team from three Consular officers to one Consular officer?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to review CA's ability to provide rapid response support globally.

Question. Does the State Department still have a Consular Rapid Response Team?

Answer. As I am not yet in position, I do not have this information.

Question. If so, how many consular officers are currently assigned to the Consular Rapid Response Team?

Answer. As I am not yet in position, I do not have this information.

Question. If not, why was the Consular Rapid Response Team dissolved?

Answer. As I was not in the Bureau of Consular Affairs in July 2025, I am not able to provide this information.

Question. If so, how do you plan to surge capacity quickly should there be an urgent need to boost consular capacity at a post?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to review CA's ability to provide rapid response support globally.

Question. To avoid dangerous gaps in services, would you consider recalling any separated generalist Foreign Service Officers who are willing to fill critical overseas consular vacancies?

Answer. If confirmed, I plan to continue reviewing CA's staffing posture in conjunction with Department leadership.

Question. If confirmed, are you committed to ensuring Consular Affairs fulfills its mission to ensure the safety of U.S. citizens abroad and the integrity of U.S. travel documents?

Answer. Yes. As I noted in my confirmation hearing, if confirmed, I plan to focus on three strategic priorities: the safety and security of Americans overseas; upholding and improving the integrity of our immigration system; and innovation in the Bureau of Consular Affairs to modernize provision of passports and other services. By focusing on these priorities, we can ensure the safety of U.S. citizens abroad and maintain the integrity of U.S. passports and visas.

Question. If confirmed, are you committed to ensuring Consular Affairs fulfills its mission to ensure the safety of U.S. citizens who hold dual citizenship?

Answer. If confirmed, I will seek to protect the safety and security of all U.S. citizens.

Question. If confirmed, will you provide the same level of consular services to U.S. citizens and U.S. citizens who hold dual citizenship as your predecessors have done?

Answer. If confirmed, I will seek to ensure that the Bureau of Consular Affairs and embassies and consulates worldwide continue to provide all appropriate consular services to all U.S. citizens.

Question. Did you decide to prevent or delay U.S. funding for this program, which has bipartisan support, that helps Iranian civilians circumvent restrictions on the internet and communications systems imposed by the Iranian regime?

Answer. NEA did not stop funding for internet freedom technology; rather, NEA identified and funded new mechanisms to ensure internet freedom for Iranian citizens, as some previous tools were not effective in an event of a full internet shutdown.

Question. If so, why?

Answer. Please see response to question 17.

Question. If not, who made this decision to prevent U.S. funding for this program?

Answer. Please see response to question 17.

Question. If confirmed, do you commit to promoting State Department employees based on merit rather than political “purity tests”?

Answer. If confirmed, I will continue to seek to promote candidates based on merit.

RESPONSES TO FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MORA NAMDARKHAN BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

Question. Do you agree it is the responsibility of the U.S. Government to protect American citizens abroad?

Answer. As I noted in my confirmation hearing, all Americans abroad deserve support and attention from the U.S. Government consistent with the law.

Question. Do you agree that the State Department, and specifically Consular Affairs, plays a central role in that endeavor?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Do you believe the Department should actively exert diplomatic pressure on foreign governments to conduct credible investigations and pursue accountability when U.S. citizens are killed or detained abroad, including in cases where local authorities fail to conduct a credible investigation that results in appropriate accountability?

Answer. As I said during my hearing, if confirmed, I will prioritize ensuring that no American is left behind consistent with law. I will work closely with the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, the White House, and our embassies worldwide to do all we can to bring wrongfully detained Americans home and prevent future cases through diplomacy, deterrence, and enhanced consular information. I will ensure that consular officers assist all U.S. citizens detained overseas, including quickly and forcefully raising mistreatment and humanitarian concerns, including through diplomatic channels where warranted.

I would refer you to law enforcement entities to speak to investigations regarding U.S. citizens who are killed abroad.

Question. As the current Senior Bureau Official in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, what steps have you taken to ensure accountability in the death of American citizens in the West Bank or getting Mohammed Ibrahim released?

Answer. As the nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs. I am recused from all consular matters while my confirmation is pending. I would refer you to law enforcement entities to speak to investigations regarding any U.S. citizen who is killed abroad.

Question. If you are confirmed, do you commit to pressuring the Government of Israel to release Mohammed Ibrahim?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to bring all Americans determined to be wrongfully detained home, consistent with law.

Question. If you are confirmed, do you commit to pursuing accountability for the killing of Saif Musallet and other Americans killed in the West Bank?

Answer. I would refer you to law enforcement entities to speak to any investigations regarding U.S. citizens who are killed abroad.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO MORA NAMDARKHAN BY SENATOR JACKY ROSEN

Question. Do you commit to only fulfilling the role you’ve been nominated for, which is Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs, if confirmed?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to serving the American people as the Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Consular Affairs. I remain at the service of the President and the Secretary of State.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO LEO BRENT BOZELL III BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. In your view, what are the most pressing issues or challenges in the US/South Africa relationship?

Answer. The United States seeks a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with South Africa. Our two countries have long worked together on a wide variety of issues, including trade, health, and energy collaboration. However, it is no secret that we are currently facing a moment of heightened tension in the bilateral relationship. If confirmed, I would advocate to address the Trump Administration's concerns on three main issues: South Africa's growing ties with our strategic competitors, a lack of fairness in our trade relationship, and South Africa's domestic policies, such as the potential for land expropriation that threaten the security and business environment.

Question. The African National Congress (ANC) lost its parliamentary majority in the landmark May 2024 election, requiring it to form a Government of National Unity with the Democratic Alliance and eight other political parties. The Government of National Unity has faced many challenges in its 16 months of life. As U.S. Ambassador to South Africa, how will you approach engaging with the South African Government of National Unity and the respective coalition members?

Answer. I am aware the Government of National Unity (GNU) represents a diverse ten-party coalition. If confirmed, I will engage members of the governing coalition to advance U.S. interests in South Africa.

Question. For years, this Committee and I have urged the Biden Administration to face the reality of our relationship with South Africa. The ANC-led South Africa works closely with our adversaries—Iran, China, Russia, Hamas, and others—and mistreats partners like Taiwan. The Biden Administration ignored our concerns. President Trump has shined a bright light on the U.S.-South Africa relationship and put the brakes on Biden's misguided and naive policy. If confirmed, you'll go to South Africa as the Trump Administration takes these issues head-on. Do you commit to working with this Committee to make sure our concerns about South Africa are finally addressed?

Answer. Yes, I share your concerns. If confirmed, I look forward to working together.

Question. Do you commit to raising challenges faced by Taiwan in South Africa, including bureaucratic issues related to the status of its office in Johannesburg, visas and tax status, with the Government of South Africa?

Answer. Yes. If confirmed, I will encourage South Africa to allow the Taipei Liaison Office to remain in Pretoria. Taiwan is a reliable partner, and its relationships around the world provide significant benefits to the citizens of those countries, including South Africa.

Beijing increasingly tries to isolate Taiwan from the international community and constrain the sovereign choices of other countries regarding their interactions with Taiwan, including by pressuring countries to sever or downgrade ties with Taiwan. If confirmed, I will continue U.S. efforts to support Taiwan in the face of China's pressure campaign.

Question. While President Trump has been focused on developing an actionable peace plan to end the war in Gaza, South Africa's strategy of antisemitic rhetoric and weaponizing international bodies has been unhelpful at best. Do you envision any meaningful way South Africa can contribute to peace in Gaza?

Answer. I commend President Trump for his success in securing the Gaza peace agreement. If confirmed, I would encourage the South African government to improve its relations with Israel, support the ceasefire and President Trump's 20-Point Plan, counter antisemitism, and support Israel's right to defend itself from terrorism. I wholeheartedly agree with the Administration's repudiation of South Africa's baseless allegations against Israel at the International Court of Justice. The Administration rightly warned that this case and other instances of lawfare would only serve to embolden Hamas and greatly harm the negotiations for peace and the release of hostages.

Question. After many years of Iran's nuclear non-compliance, snapback sanctions on Iran from UNSCR 2231 from the failed JCPOA have been reinstated. Unfortunately, South Africa has cultivated a closer relationship with Iran in recent years, including welcoming them into BRICS and increasing military cooperation. Furthermore, South Africa remains on the FATF grey list for its deficient anti-money laun-

dering and counterterror financing efforts. How will you engage your South African counterparts to ensure they fully enforce U.N. sanctions on Iran?

Answer. If confirmed, I will fully engage my team in pushing for South Africa's compliance with the re-imposed U.N. sanctions and other restrictive measures on Iran.

If confirmed, I commit to pressuring South Africa to strengthen its framework and institutions that counter money laundering and terrorist finance.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO LEO BRENT BOZELL III BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. South Africa has one of the highest rates of HIV transmission in the world. If confirmed, will you work to ensure lifesaving treatment and prevention services through PEPFAR reach those in need?

Answer. PEPFAR initiatives have significantly reduced HIV incidence in South Africa, directly supporting the U.S. goals of saving lives and limiting the potential spread of disease to U.S. populations. If confirmed, I will work to build on the successes of PEPFAR, as well as promote American health innovation and products around the world. Health programs should deliver concrete results and create pathways to local ownership and self-reliance.

The South African government now funds roughly 77 percent of all expenses related to HIV/AIDS control and treatment in the country and procures 100 percent of its own HIV commodities—rates far higher than most on the continent. Most recently, the PEPFAR Bridge Plan for South Africa was approved for a 6-month implementation period, spanning from October 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026. This plan ensures uninterrupted HIV service delivery and reaffirms the United States' interest in combating HIV/AIDS in South Africa. The \$115 million allocated under this plan supports core services aligned with the Limited Waiver to Pause U.S. Foreign Assistance for Life-Saving HIV Service Provision, issued in February 2025. The Bridge Plan prioritizes service continuity with minimal programmatic changes, focusing on country-specific needs and maximizing life-saving impact.

I understand the Department recently announced a partnership with Gilead and the Global Fund to introduce lenacapavir (LEN), a long-acting injectable PrEP that protects individuals from HIV for 6 months from a single injection. LEN eliminates the need for daily medication and significantly eases the challenges of adherence for patients. This breakthrough has the potential to improve health outcomes, enhance patients' quality of life, and broaden access to effective HIV prevention for those in need. The introduction of LEN in South Africa will be supported through the Global Fund. Partnerships with The Global Fund and Gilead will help make HIV prevention innovations available to countries such as South Africa that procure their own commodities.

Question. If confirmed, within your first 60 days of arriving in Pretoria, do you commit to briefing my staff on whether the State Department has determined a genocide is taking place against Afrikaners?

Answer. If confirmed, I am happy to brief your staff on my initial observations as Ambassador on the situation in South Africa, including as it pertains to abuses like government-sponsored race-based discrimination that are committed against Afrikaners, within my first 60 days of arriving in Pretoria.

Question. What is the significance of South Africa chairing the G20 Summit in November?

Answer. South Africa assumed the G20 presidency on December 1, 2024, under the theme of "Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability." Despite difficult dynamics in the bilateral relationship, I understand U.S. agencies are participating in select G20 meetings focused on advancing U.S. interests, monitoring developments, and ensuring a smooth transition to the United States' G20 presidency in December. The outcomes of these meetings set the stage for the G20 Leaders' Summit at the end of the incumbency. Vice President JD Vance will lead the U.S. delegation to the G20 Leaders' Summit in November.

Question. If confirmed, will you work with the South Africans to transition the G20 presidency from South Africa to the United States?

Answer. Yes. I understand the Bureau of International Organizations and Mission South Africa are already coordinating with the South African government to man-

age an orderly transition of the G20 presidency from South Africa to the United States.

Question. As President Ramaphosa aims to diversify the country's trading partners, how do you intend to uphold America's privileged bilateral relationship with South Africa?

Answer. South Africa is the United States' largest bilateral trading partner, and the third largest destination of U.S. foreign direct investment, in Africa. In areas such as critical minerals and energy, significant opportunities exist to deepen supply chains and commercial cooperation between American and South African companies. If confirmed, I also would press South Africa for the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers that disadvantage American exporters, while promoting American industry as the partner of choice for South Africa's economic growth.

Question. South Africa has been helpful in supporting peacekeeping missions such as MONUSCO in the DRC—which is a priority of this administration—as well as in countering Al-Qaeda affiliates in Northern Mozambique. How do you intend to build on these shared regional priorities?

Answer. The United States has worked successfully with South Africa on shared regional security interests in Africa, including its role in peacekeeping missions in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Sudan, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. If confirmed, I would review existing engagement to ensure our cooperation advances objectives in our common interests.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO LEO BRENT BOZELL III BY SENATOR TIM KAINE

Question. Do you support a refugee admissions policy that prioritizes refugees based on their race?

Answer. I understand that USCIS adjudicates U.S. Refugee Admissions Program applications from South Africa on a case-by-case basis, including an evaluation of claimed need of protection, consistent with long-standing U.S. refugee laws. As with any refugee, admissions should be based on evidence of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. I would refer you to DHS for additional details on their process.

Question. Do you support a refugee admissions policy that only admits white refugees?

Answer. No. I support a refugee admissions policy based on U.S. law, including adjudications based on evidence of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BENJAMIN LEON, JR. BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. Spain is the only NATO ally that refused the pledge to spend 5 percent GDP on defense by 2035 and has only just surpassed 2 percent on defense this year.

As Russia escalates its provocations against our European allies, how will you work to make sure Spain fulfills its share of the burden of our collective security?

Answer. Despite joining the Hague Defense Commitment consensus of increasing defense spending to 5 percent of GDP, President Sanchez and his Defense Minister state they will only meet 2 percent spending. If confirmed, I will make it my priority to strengthen bilateral defense cooperation and will urge Spain to increase its defense investment in line with all NATO Allies' commitment to spend 5 percent of GDP on defense. I will also encourage Spain to follow-through on other commitments, such as its recent pledge to contribute to the Prioritized Ukraine Requirements List.

Question. Spain has retained concerning ties with China, including by allowing Huawei to retain government contracts to manage sensitive digital data bases despite the associated cybersecurity risks.

How can the U.S. push Spain to recognize threats posed by Chinese malign influence and take action to better counter it?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with Spanish leaders to recognize and address the significant challenges China poses as a strategic rival to the United States and Europe. I will also advocate with Spanish officials that they protect their critical infrastructure from unsecure Chinese firms, including Huawei.

Question. Spain was one of the first U.S. allies to recognize a Palestinian state post-October 7, setting precedent for more allies to do the same. This effectively rewards Hamas for its aggression against Israel and creates challenges to creating a lasting peace that would set Gaza free from terrorist influence.

How will you engage the government of Spain to rectify these mistakes and adopt a more productive policy toward the Israel-Gaza conflict?

Answer. If confirmed, I will urge the Spanish government to be a constructive partner in advancing peace in the Middle East, supporting the ceasefire, countering antisemitism, and promoting Israel's right to defend itself. In particular, I will work with the Spanish government to reverse its arms embargo, restrictions on airspace, and restrictions on ships carrying fuel for the Israeli military using Spanish ports.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BENJAMIN LEON, JR. BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. President Trump has recently suggested that Spain should be kicked out of NATO or perhaps even be punished with greater tariffs due to its reduced defense spending. If confirmed, how would you encourage Spain to commit to increased defense spending without undermining our security interests?

Answer. I support President Trump's efforts to ensure that NATO Allies, including Spain, contribute their fair share toward NATO. If confirmed, I will work to strengthen bilateral defense cooperation and will urge Spain to increase its defense investment in line with all NATO Allies' commitment to spend 5 percent of GDP on defense. I will also encourage Spain to follow-through on other defense-related commitments aligned with U.S. interests, including President Sanchez's recent commitment to support the Prioritized Ukraine Requirements List.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BENJAMIN LEON, JR. BY SENATOR BILL HAGERTY

Question. In March 2015, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) issued a notice of finding under Section 311 of the USA PATRIOT Act designating Banca Privada d'Andorra (BPA) as a "financial institution of primary money laundering concern" and a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) for imposition of a special measure against BPA. In March 2016, FINCEN withdrew this finding and this NPRM.

Are you familiar with FinCEN and its actions with respect to BPA in 2015?

Answer. Yes, I am familiar with the 2015 FinCEN USA PATRIOT actions involving BPA.

Question. In March 2015, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) issued a notice of finding under Section 311 of the USA PATRIOT Act designating Banca Privada d'Andorra (BPA) as a "financial institution of primary money laundering concern" and a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) for imposition of a special measure against BPA. In March 2016, FINCEN withdrew this finding and this NPRM.

If confirmed, will you work with the U.S. Treasury Department and the Governments of Andorra and Spain to ensure that any future use of such authorities is carried out in a manner that is fair, transparent, and consistent with due process?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with the U.S. Treasury Department and the Governments of Andorra and Spain to ensure actions are carried out in a manner that is fair, transparent, and consistent with 31 USC 5318(a).

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BRENT CHRISTENSEN BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. The interim government has pursued an eastward foreign policy as it diversifies from Bangladesh's historic close ties with India. In addition to pursuing membership in ASEAN, Bangladesh has also pursued closer economic ties with China. During Chief Advisor Yunus's first trip abroad, he signed multiple agreements on increasing economic, technical, and cultural cooperation with China and secured promises for \$2.1 billion in new investments in key infrastructure, industrial, and healthcare projects. If confirmed, how will you address issues concerning malign Chinese influence with your Bangladeshi counterparts?

Answer. If confirmed, I will prioritize strengthening U.S.-Bangladesh commercial ties by promoting American investments and partnerships that offer high-quality, transparent, sustainable alternatives to Chinese investments. I will also work to deepen U.S. economic engagement, including expanding access to American technology and expertise to reduce reliance on Chinese technology.

Question. Are there opportunities where the U.S. can present alternatives to PRC arms sales or infrastructure investments that align with our strategic interests?

Answer. The United States can present alternatives to Chinese arms sales and infrastructure investments by providing sustainable, long-term security cooperation packages that responsibly meet the needs of Bangladesh and advance our strategic interests. The United States can deepen its military partnership with Bangladesh through expanded access to advanced training, technology, and joint exercises that support regional security. Recognizing budgetary concerns, we can explore foreign military financing that includes burden-sharing. We can also promote more affordable allied systems and encourage interoperability with U.S. and allied platforms. Finally, we can support transparent, financially sustainable infrastructure investments that align with U.S. strategic interests as well as Bangladesh's.

Question. The U.S. has historically funded the lion's share of humanitarian assistance for Rohingya. In September, the Trump administration pledged an additional \$60 million to support Rohingya refugees, and the State Department has worked to secure increased funding commitments from partner countries as well. How can the U.S. leverage its funding commitments to encourage meaningful policy changes by Bangladesh to develop sustainable solutions for Rohingya refugees?

Answer. The United States remains committed to providing life-saving humanitarian assistance for Rohingya refugees while encouraging burden-sharing among international partners. If confirmed, I will engage Bangladesh on meaningful policy changes to allow livelihood opportunities for Rohingya refugees, such as vocational training and legal work opportunities, which can reduce dependency on humanitarian aid. I will also emphasize the importance of addressing the root causes of the crisis.

Question. In your opinion, what could those solutions look like?

Answer. Sustainable solutions for the Rohingya crisis should focus on improving refugees' self-reliance while working on a political solution to allow for safe, voluntary repatriation to Burma. If confirmed, I will advocate for increased donor burden-sharing, efficient aid delivery, and policies that provide refugees access to education, vocational training, and legal work opportunities.

Question. Bangladesh recently participated in joint exercises with the U.S. for the first time since August 2024. Apart from Bangladesh's reliance on Chinese weapons, what opportunities and challenges do you see for increasing our security partnership with Bangladesh?

Answer. Our bilateral defense relationship remains strong and is built on mutual respect and shared priorities. U.S. programs such as International Military Education Training, the State Partnership Program, transfer of Excess Defense Articles, and the Maritime Security Initiative have enhanced bilateral security cooperation and interoperability. Routine military exercises and staff talks foster collaboration. Expanding these efforts, particularly in maritime security and counterterrorism, can further strengthen our partnership and regional security. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that challenges such as Chinese maritime activity, investments in strategic infrastructure, and access to Bangladesh's security forces do not become impediments to deepened U.S.-Bangladesh cooperation.

Question. In your view, what should be U.S. priorities for our bilateral cooperation with Bangladeshi armed forces and law enforcement?

Answer. If confirmed, I will support efforts to enhance Bangladesh's capacity to address transnational crime, including combating human and drug trafficking, countering terrorism, and preventing illicit trade, while strengthening maritime security and border management. If confirmed, I will support continued U.S. cooperation to improve policing, criminal deterrence, and military interoperability to advance U.S. security interests.

Question. After many years of Iran's nuclear non-compliance, snapback sanctions on Iran from UNSCR 2231 from the failed JCPOA have been reinstated. The regulatory and compliance infrastructure necessary for enforcing U.N. sanctions on Iran is arduous for large economies like the U.S. and EU, much lower-middle-income country like Bangladesh that already faces many of its own challenges. How will you work with your Bangladeshi counterparts to ensure compliance with the snapback sanctions to prevent violations that may threaten Bangladesh's access to U.S. and EU markets?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work closely with Bangladesh counterparts to strengthen regulatory capacity and ensure compliance with sanctions and other measures reimposed due to U.N. snapback. By sharing best practices to meet international obligations and fostering cooperation, we can prevent violations and help Bangladesh safeguard its access to U.S. and EU markets.

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO BRENT CHRISTENSEN BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

Question. What challenges does the United States face in Bangladesh when it comes to our strategic competition with China and how do you intend to address these challenges if confirmed?

Answer. Chinese investments in strategic infrastructure and digital technology have an impact on U.S. economic and national security interests in the region. If confirmed, I will work to strengthen commercial and security ties with Bangladesh by promoting American alternatives that reduce dependence on Chinese options. I will also work to enhance information sharing aimed at bolstering Bangladesh's maritime security and critical infrastructure.

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO AMER GHALIB BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—We received no response from Hon. Amer Ghalib to the following questions from Senator Risch.]

President Trump and Secretary Rubio have made clear their priority in U.S. foreign policy is to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous, in large part through increased access for American businesses overseas.

Question. How would you describe Kuwait's investment environment for American businesses?

[No response received.]

Question. Are you aware that the Department of State and Department of Commerce have both identified recurring challenges for American businesses in Kuwait, including payment delays, lack of transparency, and a biased judicial system?

[No response received.]

Question. If confirmed, how will you use your position as Ambassador to advocate for and defend American businesses?

[No response received.]

One of President Trump's greatest accomplishments as a peacemaker has been the Abraham Accords, in which several Arab countries normalized relations with Israel. Unfortunately, many in Kuwait remain strongly opposed to even discussing Israel, much less normalizing relations.

Question. Why did you oppose the Abraham Accords, and how will you advance the prospects for peace between Israel and Kuwait if you were confirmed to serve as ambassador?

[No response received.]

Each year, the State Department is required to submit a report on international efforts to boycott, divest, and sanction Israel, also known as BDS, and relies on input from embassies around the world to identify concerning actions and rhetoric. As recently as July 2025, the State Department found that “Kuwait still applies a primary boycott of goods and services produced in Israel.”

Question. Do you agree with the standing U.S. policy to oppose the BDS movement?

[No response received.]

Question. Will you commit to report BDS concerns in Kuwait?

[No response received.]

Question. How will you engage Kuwaiti officials to bring the boycott to an end?

[No response received.]

RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO AMER GHALIB BY SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

[EDITOR’S NOTE.—We received no response from Hon. Amer Ghalib to the following questions from Senator Shaheen.]

Tenure as Hamtramck Mayor

Question. Regarding your response to a posting by Nasr Hussain on Facebook that the “Holocaust [was] God’s advance punishment of the ‘Chosen People’ for the savagery they’re committing today against the innocent Palestinians children and civilians,” you stated that you told news outlets you condemned his remarks. Please provide the Committee with evidence of the specific public comments you made condemning Mr. Hussain’s remarks.

[No response received.]

Question. At your hearing, you responded to statements made by Nasr Hussain by saying he was a “volunteer.” According to the Hamtramck Planning Commission website, all members of the Commission are appointed by the Mayor. Did you appoint him to the Commission, yes or no and if yes, what year and month did you appoint him?

[No response received.]

Question. According to the Hamtramck Planning Commission website, all members of the Commission serve without compensation. Is this what you were referring to when you called Mr. Hussain a “volunteer”?

[No response received.]

Question. At your hearing, you said that in February 2022, you “passed a resolution” to condemn antisemitism. As Mayor, did you have any role in drafting or voting on the resolution, or was it passed by the City Council?

[No response received.]

RESPONSE TO AN ADDITIONAL QUESTION FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO AMER GHALIB BY SENATOR RICK SCOTT

[EDITOR’S NOTE.—We received no response from Hon. Amer Ghalib to the following question from Senator Scott.]

Mr. Ghalib, as Florida’s U.S. Senator, I am proud to represent my State’s large Jewish community, and I’ve been an extremely vocal supporter of our nation’s great friend and ally, Israel, for years. So has President Trump—the most pro-Israel president our nation’s ever had.

Like many members of our Jewish community, I was sickened by what happened on October 7th and the escalation in threats and terror attacks we have seen against the Jewish community since, both in the United States and around the globe.

It is on every American to stand with our ally and stand up to hate and antisemitism in every form, and no one has shown a better example of this

than President Trump. Anyone who works on behalf of the President must reflect his priorities.

Question. Mr. Ghalib, I am sure you would agree it is important for the entire administration to work to accomplish President Trump's agenda, correct?

[No response received.]

Based on your public statements about Oct 7, our ally Israel, and Jewish Americans, I have deep concerns about supporting your nomination.

I want to draw our attention to a number of concerns that have been raised regarding your nomination and prior public statements.

First, on X on Oct 15, 2023, just days after the horrific Hamas slaughter and kidnapping of Israeli men, women, and children, you publicly called the facts of the Oct 7 massacre quote "lies and false information."

Second, you praised the actions of Houthi forces who attacked Israeli ships, specifically referencing the hijacking of the Galaxy Leader.

Third, I understand that under your leadership as Mayor, the city council passed a resolution aligned with the BDS movement, restricting investments in companies tied to Israel. I hold the opposite opinion, and as Florida's Governor, we worked to ban BDS.

NO ONE working for the president should be celebrating attacks on Israeli ships, our ally, specifically because you apparently hate Israel and want the Houthis to succeed in their war against Israel.

Mr. Ghalib, the Houthis are, as you know, a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization responsible for attacks endangering maritime security and threatening U.S. forces in the region. The Houthis are at war with the US. These are deeply concerning points of view for anyone who wants to serve in a diplomatic role on behalf of the United States.

