

Opening Statement of Ambassador Jack Markell
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Italian Republic and Republic of San Marino
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
June 21, 2023

Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Ricketts, and Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear as the nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Italian Republic and the Republic of San Marino. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence.

I am indebted to my family for the love and support which have played an important role in my being here – my wife, Carla, our kids, Molly and Michael, my sister, and her family.

I am grateful to my parents and brother who are no longer with us, as well as to my brother's family.

I had the honor of appearing before you in 2021 during my nomination to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. I am humbled by the support of the Committee and by my subsequent confirmation by the Senate. Serving in that role has prepared me to serve as the Ambassador to Italy and San Marino.

Even though my initial career was in the private sector, I had long been interested in a career in public service. I always believed that my home state and my country had given me enormous opportunities, and I wanted to play a role in ensuring that similar opportunities are available to future generations.

As Governor of Delaware, concerned about the impacts of globalization and automation, I knew the states and countries that out-educate today will out-compete tomorrow. That's why I worked to ensure that our children had opportunities to thrive in school. For those who wanted to go to college, we worked to secure opportunities for them to do so, even when they couldn't afford it. For those who wanted to go directly to work, we created new programs to help them get the skills needed for good-paying jobs.

My experiences working across the aisle and with representatives of employers, labor unions, all levels of government and non-government organizations prepare me well to serve as Ambassador to Italy and San Marino.

Given Russia's unjustified and brutal war against Ukraine, the threats posed by authoritarian regimes like the PRC and Iran, and global challenges from climate change to infectious diseases, it is abundantly clear that strong relationships with our allies are more important than ever.

Italy is one such ally and has been for many decades.

18 million Americans are of Italian descent. 6 million Americans visit Italy annually. Italy is home to 30,000 American soldiers, sailors, airmen, DoD civilians, and their dependents.

Italy is a strong supporter of the allied effort to confront Russia's war of aggression and supports the people of Ukraine with military, economic, and humanitarian assistance.

If confirmed, I will have four main objectives.

First, I would promote the safety and well-being of Americans living in or visiting Italy.

Second, I would expand our already deep economic ties, promoting U.S. exports and attracting additional Italian investment in the U.S. to support American jobs.

Third, I would aim to maintain and deepen our very strong military and security partnership with Italy.

Fourth, I would encourage increased Italian defense spending consistent with NATO Allies' two percent commitment.

If confirmed, I will be an effective representative of the United States, not only to our Italian government interlocutors but also around the country, to business groups, students, civil society, and others.

The stakes of our relationships with important allies like Italy are enormous. We are truly at an inflection point in history. Authoritarian countries like Russia, China, and Iran threaten the way of life and values that we and our like-minded allies have enjoyed for many years.

When I appeared before you in 2021, I said "The United States and our allies must continue to demonstrate that democracy, human rights, free markets, and capitalism deliver growth and innovation and a better quality of life for all our citizens." That is certainly still true today and Italy has a key role to play. If confirmed, I would be honored to serve as the U.S. Ambassador and forge the strongest possible ties between our countries.

Thank you for your consideration. I am at your disposal to answer any questions you may have.