

Statement of Kara McDonald
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Lithuania
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 21, 2023

Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Ricketts, distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today as the nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Lithuania. I thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me.

I want to honor those who made it possible for me to be here. I thank my husband of 21 years, Geneve Mantri, for his selfless love and good wit through a foreign service career. We are blessed to have two sons, Liam and Ciaran, whom I thank for their resilience through multiple moves, languages, and schools. I am grateful for my parents and brother John. To my Dad, whose own parents never went to high school, but who earned a medical degree, served in the U.S. military, and championed my education and career in public service. And to my late Mom, who taught me grit, to work hard, and to leave every place better than I found it.

I am a career Foreign Service Officer with 25 years of government service under seven Presidential administrations. Much of my career has focused on supporting freedom and countering authoritarianism in Europe and globally. As Russia's brutal war against Ukraine demonstrates, upholding freedom—the right of a sovereign country to determine its future and to choose democracy—is central to America's interests and international security. In my current position, I have been privileged to work with this Committee over the last three years to hold Russia to account for its abuses, to counter the Kremlin's disinformation and aggressive behavior, and to defend and advance human rights and democratic values in Europe and beyond. I thank the Committee for its strong bipartisan leadership on these issues.

If confirmed, I will have no higher **priority than the safety and security of Mission Vilnius and all U.S. citizens in the Republic of Lithuania.**

My second priority will be to strengthen regional security and counter Russia's aggression.

Lithuania is a true strategic partner and strong NATO ally, with outsized contributions to Transatlantic security. In July, Lithuania will host in Vilnius the next NATO Summit, and Lithuania consistently models a commitment to investing in the Alliance, with current defense spending at over 2.5 percent of GDP.

This is because Lithuania knows what is at stake, and it is providing inspiring support to Ukraine with over one billion euro in assistance, welcoming over 77,000 refugees from Ukraine, and even crowdfunding radars and a combat drone.

If confirmed, I will strengthen our security partnership and Alliance through NATO and elevate Lithuania in its support for Ukraine.

My third priority will be to deepen our bilateral trade and commercial ties, and to support Lithuania's energy security and sustainability.

Once again punching above its weight, Lithuania is leading by example to de-risk its trade and energy relationships from autocratic sources. Lithuania led the way on energy independence, and was the first EU member to stop all energy imports from Russia. Likewise, Lithuania exhibited extraordinary resilience to economic coercion from the People's Republic of China. With support from the United States and others, Lithuania is now a model for turning economic vulnerability into opportunity. If confirmed, I look forward to advancing these secure and resilient supply chains.

My fourth priority will be to partner and strengthen our shared work with Lithuania in advancing democratic principles and human rights in the region and globally.

I am inspired by the steadfast refusal of the Lithuanian people to accept Soviet occupation which the United States also rejected. In fact, we maintained the Lithuanian embassy here in Washington, DC throughout Soviet times. The Lithuanians then stepped out bravely as the first nation to declare independence from the Soviet Union, and last year, Lithuania and the United States proudly commemorated 100 years of bilateral ties. We are truly partners in freedom.

Lithuania's commitment to countering authoritarianism is evident in its safe harbor for Belarusian and Russian activists who continue to pursue freedom and democratic aspirations in their home countries. And working with our motivated partners in the Lithuanian Government, I hope to build on progress to address the legacy of the Holocaust.

The relationship between the United States and Lithuania is strong. If confirmed, I pledge to partner with Congress to further these priorities, and to engage individuals from across Lithuanian society as we strive toward a more free, more prosperous, and more peaceful tomorrow.

Mister Chairman, Ranking Member, thank you, and I look forward to your questions.