

Statement of Kenneth A. Howery
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
May 8, 2025

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, Distinguished Members of the Committee:

It is an honor and privilege to address the Committee as President Trump's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark.

I thank President Trump and Secretary Rubio for the trust they have placed in me with this nomination. I also thank the outstanding professionals at the White House, the Department of State, our Embassy in Denmark, and our Consulate in Greenland for sharing their expertise and guidance.

I would like to acknowledge my family who are here supporting me today, including my parents, Karen Howery and Charles Kenneth Howery, as well as my sister, Christina Howery, and her daughter, Emma McLellan. Supporting me from home are Christina's husband, John McLellan, their other daughter, Eden McLellan, my father's wife, Jan Howery, and the rest of my family.

I learned the importance of serving our nation and its values from my family. Both of my grandfathers served in World War II: Hubert Jurek, who fought in Europe and North Africa as part of the larger Allied effort which also liberated Denmark 80 years ago this month, and Fred Howery, who battled in the Pacific Theatre. Both returned to a home they helped make safer, and eventually raised their own families in Texas, where I grew up.

I later moved to Silicon Valley, where I co-founded PayPal and then a venture capital fund. That fund supported hundreds of entrepreneurs and their companies, which created over 100,000 jobs and trillions of dollars in value. We led early investments in pioneering companies working in fields including aerospace, defense, artificial intelligence, and biotechnology.

In 2019, I left the private sector for public service, representing our country as the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Sweden. Through this work I learned that nations can strengthen their relationships by endeavoring to truly hear and understand each other. While in Sweden, I worked to enhance our vital transatlantic partnership: increasing security cooperation, countering China's influence, promoting President Trump's burden-sharing priorities, and strongly advocating for Sweden's increased defense spending and interoperability, helping pave the way for its eventual NATO accession. Alongside an excellent team at Embassy Stockholm, I also advanced trade, investment, and Arctic defense collaboration. My experience in Stockholm reinforced the importance of aligning common principles with shared responsibilities and opportunities, and advancing American interests while respecting Allies. If confirmed, I look forward to likewise building on our strong relationship with the Kingdom of Denmark, another close Ally with whom we share many interests and values.

Denmark is a country I have long admired, and have visited many times. The U.S.-Danish bond traces back to 1636, when the first Danish immigrants arrived in what is now New York. We have had uninterrupted diplomatic relations since 1801, and today, more than 1.2 million Americans proudly claim Danish heritage and over 30,000 call Denmark home. We are at a consequential moment for our partnership, with Denmark making markedly greater investments in defense and assuming key roles in

international organizations: the UN Security Council, Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and this month the Kingdom assumes the chair of the Arctic Council. If confirmed, in addition to the core priority of protecting the safety and security of American citizens, I will focus on three key priorities:

My first priority will be our shared security. Denmark is a founding member of NATO, and Danish troops, including their renowned special forces, served alongside our own in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, the Balkans, and the Baltics. Some of these soldiers fell in combat while serving alongside our own troops, and we honor their bravery and sacrifice. Denmark is an F-35 founding partner nation, and its plan to spend over 3% of its GDP on defense this year, with a continued upward trajectory, underscores Denmark's dedication to burden sharing within NATO. I will work to ensure that Copenhagen maintains that trajectory and fulfills the President's mandate of allocating 5% of GDP. The Faroe Islands, located along a critical transit route in the North Atlantic, is important for maritime security and, if confirmed, I plan to continue U.S. engagement with the Faroese on this front. I will work closely with Danish leaders to strengthen defense, law enforcement, and intelligence cooperation, ensure NATO readiness and interoperability, and address emerging threats.

My second priority will be our economic relationship. The United States is Denmark's largest trading partner outside of Europe. Denmark is a major investor in the United States, supporting over 91,000 jobs nationwide. Just as two examples of the \$40 billion Danish firms have invested here, Novo Nordisk produces medicines in North Carolina, and probably the world's most famous Danish brand, LEGO, is currently gearing up to make its iconic bricks in Virginia. Denmark is also a leader in life sciences, shipping, and quantum science, and I will seek opportunities to strengthen our ties in technology, entrepreneurship, and scientific research.

My third priority will be Arctic security, particularly in Greenland, drawing on my experience in Sweden working on Arctic issues. The United States' security relationship with Greenland is robust, and Greenland has been home to several U.S. military installations since World War II, when the United States first assumed defense of Greenland at the request of Denmark's ambassador in exile. In 1951, the United States signed a permanent defense agreement with Denmark establishing joint responsibility for Greenland's security, and our current Pituffik Space Base - the northernmost U.S. military base - opened in 1953. Today it provides crucial defense capabilities, including missile warning, and is, as is Greenland, critical to the security of the United States.

In 2020, we reopened our Consulate in Nuuk. As Russia and China accelerate their efforts to dominate the Arctic, including Greenland, and as new sea lanes open, Greenland's geopolitical importance grows. While recent conversations about this reality, and the appropriate U.S. role in Greenland's future, have been spirited, I believe that through open dialogue and collaboration, we can find opportunities to advance our shared security and prosperity.

These priorities, while complex, are areas where we can achieve meaningful progress in the coming years. I believe my experience building global companies, advancing transatlantic partnerships, and prior service in the region has uniquely prepared me to represent the United States as Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark. I will approach this responsibility with humility, and if confirmed, will work to serve the American people and strengthen the bilateral relationship. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee. I look forward to your questions.