

**Testimony of Leslie A. Bassett**  
**Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Paraguay**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**July 10, 2014 at 10:00 a.m.**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate very much the opportunity to appear before you today. This is a great honor for me, personally and professionally. One hundred years ago my great-great grandfather, Senator William J. Stone of Missouri, sat as Chairman of this Committee during a pivotal time in world history. His concern and interest in foreign affairs inspired my decision to join the Department of State and is the foundation of my enduring respect for the important role Congress plays in our foreign policy.

I am both grateful and humbled that President Obama nominated me for this position and I appreciate the confidence that the President and Secretary Kerry have shown in me. You have my commitment that, if confirmed, I will live up to the high standards that the Administration has set for its appointees; standards that I know this Committee and the American people expect of nominees.

I come before you mindful of my family's legacy of service to the nation. My grandfather graduated from West Point, fought in World War II, and rose to the rank of General in the U.S. Army. My father is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. My two uncles served in the Air Force during the Vietnam War, but only one came home. For the last three decades, I have carried on this family tradition of service to our country as a Foreign Service Officer representing the United States across four different regions of the globe. More than half my service has focused, both in the field and from the vantage of Washington, on our relations with the Western Hemisphere. If confirmed, I will draw upon all my knowledge and experience to advance U.S. interests in our important relationship with Paraguay. And if confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee in this effort.

This is a time of opportunity in the bilateral relationship between the United States and Paraguay. We have a strong interest in supporting Paraguay's efforts to strengthen its democratic institutions, improve the rule of law, advance human rights, counter narcotics trafficking and terrorism, combat corruption and promote an effective, transparent government and judicial system. The tragedy of human

trafficking is unfortunately a significant concern in Paraguay, and I believe we can do more to encourage Paraguay to take more action to prevent human trafficking.

This is a time of opportunity in our trade relationship as well. Trade between the United States and Paraguay, while relatively modest, continues to grow. In 2013 our two-way trade totaled \$2.2 billion, leaving us with a trade surplus of \$1.6 billion. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the many U.S. businesses represented in Paraguay to support a reliable, transparent business environment conducive to continued growth in trade and investment. Steps Paraguay can take to ensure protection of intellectual property rights will help improve prospects for increased commerce.

This is a time of opportunity in our people-to-people ties, anchored by a strong Peace Corps presence, sustained by the work of dedicated colleagues from USAID, and made possible by the committed efforts of the entire U.S. Embassy in Asuncion. If confirmed, I promise to offer collaborative mission leadership focused on protecting American citizens and advancing the full range of our goals.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with you, your distinguished colleagues, and your staffs to advance our priorities with the Republic of Paraguay.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear today. I welcome any questions you may have.