

Statement of John A. Heffern

Ambassador-Designate to the The Republic of Armenia

Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

July 13, 2011

Madam Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia. I am pleased to be joined today by my wife Libby and our children, Lisa (and Ryan), Lucy, Sarah, Woody and Alley. We welcome this opportunity to again serve our nation overseas.

My mother, a naturalized American from India, could not be here today, but I would note that I owe my interest in the Foreign Service to her and to my deceased father, who was a WWII veteran and, briefly, an FSO as well.

Madam Chairman, I am honored that President Obama and Secretary Clinton have nominated me for this important post. If confirmed, I will build upon the fine work of my predecessors to advance our bilateral relationship with Armenia in all its facets: diplomatic, political, economic, trade, and in our deep people-to-people ties.

The Obama Administration has strengthened U.S. relations with Armenia. In April 2010, the Presidents of our two countries held their first bilateral meeting in 10 years and, when Secretary Clinton visited Yerevan last year, it was the first visit by a Secretary of State to Armenia in 19 years.

We have expanded development assistance to Armenia in several areas, especially in governance, economic growth, and market competitiveness, and maintained overall funding levels despite budget cuts in Europe and Eurasia. Specifically, including FY 2011, we have invested more than \$38 million since 2009 in democracy and governance programming, including over \$16 million for civil society development. During this period, we have also devoted over \$17 million to promote better access to health care and launched a new 5-year, \$22 million on enterprise development and market competitiveness. Over the past 5 years, the Millennium Challenge Corporation has invested almost \$180 million in Armenia to improve irrigation infrastructure, provide technical and financial assistance to farmers and agribusinesses, and improve rural roads. If confirmed, I would like to work on expanding the U.S.-Armenia trade relationship, building on the already strong connections between Americans and Armenians, to foster more trade and investment between our countries.

On the political front, the U.S. has encouraged Armenia to improve its human rights and democracy record, and we have seen some positive developments this year, with the government releasing those still detained from the protests after the Armenian elections in 2008. Armenia will hold important national elections in 2012 and 2013, which are opportunities for the Government of Armenia to demonstrate its commitment to democracy. The Administration supports Armenia's courageous steps to begin a process with Turkey to address their history, and to find a way to move forward together in a shared future of security and prosperity. Through the Minsk Process, the U.S. supports Armenia and Azerbaijan as they work toward a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

There is still a lot to do. If confirmed, I would continue the efforts of my most able predecessor, Ambassador Masha Yovanovitch. I will seek, as she did, opportunities to enhance our relationship with Armenia, should the Senate confirm me for this position.

My 29 years as an FSO have prepared me for this assignment. During this time, I have served faithfully in both Democratic and Republican Administrations. Following my instructions from Washington, I have done my best to advance U.S. interests and uphold American ideals. In addition, I

pledge to the committee that, if confirmed, I will report candidly and accurately to Washington my views and recommendations from the field.

My work at NATO with Armenia and other Caucasus partners has introduced me to this complex and fascinating region. I look forward to enhancing my understanding of the country and the region by working with the Armenian Government, the Armenian people, and the Armenian-American community.

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee, President Obama has recognized and deplored the horrific events that took place in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire. He has publicly called the massacre of 1.5 million Armenians at this time one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century. The President has urged Turkey and Armenia to work through their painful history to achieve a full, frank, and just acknowledgement of the facts. If confirmed, I will do my best to fulfill the President's vision.

Madam Chairman, I would like to thank you for your time today. I want to assure you that, if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you, with members of this Committee, and with the Congress as a whole in representing my fellow Americans as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia.

Thank you and I welcome your questions.