

**Testimony of Theodore Sedgwick
Ambassador-Designate to the Slovak Republic
March 11, 2010
Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

It is a privilege to be here as President Obama's nominee to become the next United States' Ambassador to the Slovak Republic. I am honored to have the confidence and trust of the President and Secretary Clinton in representing my country. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I would like to introduce my wife, Kate Sedgwick. I am very proud of her and value her love, advice and counsel. And we have special reason to celebrate her accomplishments as just a few weeks ago she received her Master's Degree in Public Health from Harvard.

I am privileged to have grown up in a family that prizes public and civic service and has been steeped in international and transatlantic relations. My grandfather, Ellery Sedgwick Sr., was editor and publisher of the Atlantic Monthly magazine, which he transformed from a New England regional publication to one that focused on national and international issues. My grandfather stood by President Wilson, both physically and editorially, when Wilson addressed Congress and brought our nation into World War I. The President frequently contributed to the pages of my grandfather's magazine, so you could say that interest in foreign policy runs through several family generations.

My father, Ellery Sedgwick Jr., was a naval intelligence officer who directed Navy fire onto gun emplacements on Utah Beach on D-Day. He fought in both the European and Pacific theaters. My uncle, Brigadier Gen. William Ross Bond, commanded the 199th Light Infantry Brigade in Vietnam and was the only general killed in ground combat during that war, in 1970.

My own experience is in the business world as an entrepreneur. As chief executive in the publishing and timber industries, I know the value and the imperative of promoting U.S. trade and commercial interests in an increasingly competitive world. If confirmed, my extensive experience publishing on defense, energy, and environment topics within the specialty publishing business would be an asset when engaging on key issues with Slovakia.

It would be an honor, if confirmed, for me to succeed your late colleague, Sen. Claiborne Pell, who was a young Foreign Service Officer in Bratislava shortly after World War II and opened what is now our US embassy. Two years after the Iron Curtain fell across Eastern Europe in 1948, the building, then a Consulate, was closed by the Communist government. The United States retained the consulate building as a symbol of hope and expectation that the Iron Curtain would eventually be lifted. Few Americans predicted that is exactly what would occur with the Velvet Revolution in 1989. The Consulate became an Embassy with the Velvet Divorce between the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic in 1993. In the period since then, the Slovaks have made remarkable strides both economically and democratically, joining NATO, the European Union, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The Slovak Republic has proven to be a strong U.S. ally and partner working with us toward common strategic goals in Afghanistan and the Balkans; helping the Administration toward its goal of closing the Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility by resettling three Guantanamo Bay detainees; and most recently joining U.S. efforts and the global community with humanitarian assistance to earthquake devastated Haiti.

A proud and active NATO member since 2004, Slovakia has 240 troops deployed to Afghanistan, with plans to increase its total commitment to over 400 soldiers by 2011. This includes a substantial contingent in Uruzgan province, a very active operational area. The Slovaks are contributing to reconstruction through their NGO community and have given financial support and large quantities of excess military equipment to the Afghan National Army. In addition to Afghan deployments, 210 Slovak soldiers serve in the UN mission in Cyprus and Slovakia has contributed to the NATO mission in Kosovo. Slovakia also contributes to United Nations, European Union and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe monitoring and crisis operations around the world, including Lebanon, Syria, and previously Georgia. If confirmed, I will work to further strengthen such strategic cooperation and encourage Slovakia to ease restrictions that may limit some of its overseas deployments.

The United States is one of Slovakia's largest foreign investors with almost \$4 billion invested, particularly in the steel, automotive, and electronics industries. If confirmed, I will focus on this valuable trade relationship and seek to increase business opportunities for both U.S. companies in the Slovak market and for Slovak companies that want to invest in the United States. One way I will

specifically work to strengthen economic ties with Slovakia, if confirmed, will be to advocate for transparency and the rule of law in business transactions as Slovakia improves its business environment and strengthens its economy. The 2009 Russia-Ukraine gas dispute deeply impacted Slovakia. Slovakia has taken steps to increase interconnectivity in the region and is interested in other ways of energy diversification. If confirmed, I will work to help Slovakia increase its energy security by supporting interconnection projects of the mostly separate energy systems within Europe; promoting greater market transparency and flexibility; and encouraging greater energy efficiency.

Growing up in the Cleveland, Ohio area gave me the opportunity to know one of the many strong and vibrant Slovak-American communities in the United States. If confirmed, I will work together with these groups to enhance these ties and share our cultural identities. Minority communities in Slovakia include large Roma and ethnic Hungarian populations. If confirmed, I will vigorously promote tolerance and minority rights in Slovakia and will urge the government to continue efforts aimed at ensuring that all minorities have the same rights and opportunities as other Slovak citizens. If confirmed, I will encourage the government to strengthen its capacities in the fight against extremism, with respect for human rights and rule of law, through law enforcement, awareness building, and education programs. Above all, if confirmed, I will build on our security relationship, especially in how the trans-Atlantic community and the UN Security Council deals with Iran. In sum, if confirmed, I will take every opportunity to engage with Slovakia to advance the goals and values of the United States.

I am honored to be asked to represent my country and my government.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you. I welcome any questions you may have