

STATEMENT OF ROBERT A. SHERMAN, OF MASSACHUSETTS,
TO BE AMBASSADOR TO THE PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 26, 2013

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Senator Johnson and distinguished Committee Members. It is an honor to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to serve as Ambassador to the Portuguese Republic. I am humbled by the confidence the President and Secretary Kerry have placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with the President, the Secretary, and Congress to advance our nation's interests in Portugal, and to promote cooperation on issues of mutual concern.

Please permit me to introduce my wife, Kim Sawyer. Kim is not only my better half, but is a lawyer, an entrepreneur, and the president of a small financial services company in Boston. I have no doubt that Kim will also be a tremendous asset in Portugal.

My two children-- Matt, age 29 and Stephanie, age 27-- unfortunately are unable to be here. Matt is Vice President of a real estate investment fund and is an MBA student at Emory University. Stephanie, who will be married next month, works with autistic and special needs children in the Newton, Massachusetts public schools.

I sit before you today, as a first generation American. My parents were both Russian immigrants who came to this country with nothing. They settled in Brockton Massachusetts, the hometown of Rocky Marciano. Brockton is located near one of the largest Portuguese communities in the United States. Growing up, these immigrants from the Azores were my neighbors and classmates, and I quickly learned about their values. The Portuguese are hardworking, tolerant, devoted to family, freedom and honor; and so very proud of their heritage. These are the same values I was taught by my parents and have passed on to my own children. They are the values that make this country strong.

America has more than just a commonality of values with the Portuguese. Portugal has been a longstanding and staunch ally of the United States. That relationship goes back to the founding of our republic when Pedro Francisco fought in General Washington's army and became a Revolutionary War hero. Portugal was also one of the first countries to recognize the United States after our independence. It was an original member of NATO, and a strong partner while serving on the UN Security Council. Portugal has supported almost every U.S.-led security operation over the last two decades, including in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The relationship with the United States is a prominent element of Portugal's foreign policy. The United States values its alliance with Portugal, and I look forward to our continuing cooperation on global peace and security.

The U.S. military has maintained a presence at Lajes Air Field, in the Azores, since the 1940s, and Azoreans have welcomed our servicemen and women into their community. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for their hospitality. I am aware of the difficulties the U.S. Air

Force downsizing presents to Portugal and the Azores, and I pledge to continue our ongoing efforts to help mitigate the economic impact.

These are not easy times for the Portuguese people. Portugal is in the midst of an economic crisis that has resulted in unemployment close to 17 percent and youth unemployment double that number. The Portuguese government has done its utmost to implement fiscal reforms. I commend the Portuguese for their continuing sacrifice and their commitment to finding a path back to economic prosperity.

The United States has a role to play here. If confirmed, one of my priorities will be to strengthen our economic relationship with Portugal, fostering U.S. job growth while simultaneously benefiting the Portuguese economy. I will work to increase trade, promote bilateral investments, and enlist Portuguese and U.S. businesses to empower innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship.

One major initiative is already underway and will directly impact this priority. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP, presents an opportunity to expand our trade relationship with Portugal while spurring economic growth on both sides of the Atlantic. TTIP has the potential to significantly increase the more than 13 million U.S. and European jobs currently supported by transatlantic trade and investment and to strengthen our economic alliance with Portugal. As important, TTIP will create strong new bonds between the United States and our European allies, while giving us a powerful tool to support an open, rules-based trading system to the benefit of a robust U.S. economy.

Finally, I want to acknowledge how the Portuguese community has enriched American culture--from Emma Lazarus's sonnet, which is engraved on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, to the iconic music of John Phillips Souza, to the everyday contributions of approximately 1.5 million Portuguese-Americans in business, politics, education, and the arts.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Johnson, and Members of the Committee, thank you for considering my nomination. I am happy to answer any questions.