

Testimony of James H. Thessin
Ambassador-Designate to the Republic of Paraguay
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate very much the opportunity to appear before this Committee today. This is a great honor for me. When in years past I was a staffer for this committee, sitting on your side of the dais, I did not expect that someday I would be here as the President's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Paraguay. Having served the Committee for several years, I continue to have great respect for this institution and will carry that with me in my new job if confirmed.

I am very grateful and humbled that President Obama has nominated me for this position and asked me to serve. You have my commitment that, if confirmed, I will work tirelessly to 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 as well.

With the Chairman's permission, I would first like to introduce my family. With me is my wife of 38 years, Marcia. We are delighted at the prospect of working to advance U.S. interests in Paraguay, if I am confirmed. Also with us are our son, Jonathan and his spouse, Rebecca. Our daughter Rachel and her spouse Will are not able to be with us, being out of town on business. I am proud of my wife and our children in so many ways, including that all five have been working daily to make this country stronger now and into the future. My wife, son, and daughter have been in public service, working respectively as a demographer, an attorney, and an engineer. Our daughter-in-law and our son-in-law have been working in universities to help build a stronger foundation in this country for tomorrow, one training educators, the other advancing science.

I come before you today as a lifelong public servant. My career with the federal government has spanned more than 35 years working in two branches of government and in various departments and agencies, most recently as the Deputy Legal Adviser at the Department of State. Before beginning with the Department in 1982, I had worked for this Committee for some three years in the late 1970s and early 1980s. I have learned much during my government service, particularly

while at the Department and on the Committee staff. If confirmed, I will draw upon all this wisdom, knowledge and experience in an effort 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.

The relationship between the United States and Paraguay is strong and mutually beneficial. The United States has a strong interest in supporting Paraguay's efforts to deepen its democratic structures, to advance human rights, to counter narcotics trafficking and terrorism, to combat corruption and the misuse of intellectual property, and to promote an effective, transparent government and judicial system.

The people of the United States believe that these principles are important, and therefore we have a strong interest in their adoption by other countries. We benefit directly when other countries make these principles their own. Not only do our citizens receive fair treatment when abroad and find a safe and welcoming environment there, but our businesses are able to invest and trade in a marketplace that is fair and predictable, placing U.S. firms in a better position to contribute to the economic prosperity of the United States as well as Paraguay. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing the productive dialogue between the United States and Paraguay and will work diligently to advance these goals.

Paraguay stands at an important juncture where the United States can help make a difference. Paraguay is less than 25 years away from a period when one person ruled the country for some 35 years, and there is significant work yet to do. During this historic period of its bicentennial, Paraguay is looking at the lessons of its past and works to design the blueprint for its future, especially as it approaches presidential and legislative elections. To help, the United States has established programs to help Paraguay institute democratic reforms, disrupt criminal organizations, develop its counterterrorism capabilities, fight corruption, and promote good governance and economic development. If confirmed, I look forward to working with President Lugo, Foreign Minister Lara Castro, the Paraguayan government, the private sector, and civil society as we seek to advance bilateral relations and strengthen the political, commercial, and cultural ties that exist between our two countries.

If confirmed, I would also give the highest priority to ensuring the well-being and safety of Americans living and traveling in Paraguay. I would also seek opportunities for enhanced trade between the United States and Paraguay, specifically, promoting U.S. exports to Paraguay as well as advocating for U.S. firms doing business in Paraguay.

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.