

**Statement of Richard R. Verma
Nominee for Ambassador to India
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
December 2, 2014**

Mr. Chairman and Senator Risch, it is a great honor to appear before you today. I have worked closely with this Committee for many years, when I worked in the Senate Leader's office and at the State Department as the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs. If confirmed, I am committed to partnering with you again in shaping our relationship to India – a country so important that President Obama called it the defining relationship for the United States in the 21st Century.

I would like to thank Senator Reid for his kind introduction, and of course, I would like to thank President Obama for nominating me, and Secretary Kerry for offering me the chance to again be part of the State Department family. It is a high honor and privilege that I don't take lightly. I'm also delighted to be here with Ambassador Mike McKinley, a highly decorated diplomat who represents the best of the Foreign Service, and Isobel Coleman, who brings a breadth of foreign policy experience to a critical position, Representative of the U.S. to the United Nations for U.N. Management and Reform.

Let me also thank my family and friends that have helped get me to this place. My wife, Pinky, my children Zoe, Lucy and Dylan, I owe them all a special debt of thanks, as they have enthusiastically embraced this new adventure and supported me at every turn. And, to my parents, Dr. Kamal Verma, who is here today, and my mother, the late Savitri Verma. They left India – the country they loved – 50 years ago to build a new life here in America, overcoming odds and working so hard. I can't thank them enough for their courage, wisdom and countless sacrifices they made on behalf of their children.

For over two decades, I have had the good fortune of working in the national security and foreign policy arenas, with much of that time focused on South Asia. Whether in the military, working here on Capitol Hill, the State Department or in the private sector, I have seen first-hand how consequential our partnership with India can be.

There is no question that this is a defining and exciting time in the U.S.-India relationship. President Obama will make a historic visit to India in January, becoming the first U.S. head of state to attend India's Republic Day and the only sitting U.S. president to visit India twice. His trip will build on Prime Minister Modi's highly successful visit to the United States this past September. There's little doubt the relationship

has been reenergized, with renewed enthusiasm to take our partnership to the next level.

The United States' strategic partnership with India is rooted in our shared democratic values and in our joint vision of a peaceful, just and prosperous world. From expanding trade and defense relationships, to ensuring maritime security and freedom of navigation; from countering terrorist networks, to promoting clean energy and sustainable development, the U.S. and India share a wide-range of critical national interests. Our partnership is deep, it touches nearly every endeavor of human pursuit, and it has produced important gains for each of our countries.

Two-way trade between our nations has increased five-fold since 2001 to nearly \$100 billion. In their recent meetings, President Obama and PM Modi committed to increasing trade another fivefold, which would create tens of thousands of new jobs in both the United States and India.

On the defense front, the US has become one of India's largest suppliers of defense items over the last three years and active discussions continue on identifying projects for co-production and

development as well as renewing our 10-year Defense Framework Agreement.

Our people-to-people exchanges are flourishing. There are over 100,000 Indian students currently studying in the U.S. And, the Indian diaspora in the United States, now estimated to number over 3 million, continues to make deep and lasting contributions to U.S. society.

On climate, energy, health, infrastructure, human rights, and development and so much more – the U.S. and Indian potential for collaboration and joint problem-solving is limited only by our imagination.

Beyond our initiatives, we are working hard at increasing regional connectivity. India shares our belief that peace and stability are much more likely to be sustained when the countries of the region are tied together in trade, economic agreements, and through physical infrastructure.

Across Asia, U.S. and Indian interests are converging. India has been called the lynchpin of our Asia rebalance. With India's Look East, and now Act East policies, our two countries can play a critically important role together in bolstering peace and security and promoting a rules-based, liberal, democratic order in the Indo-Pacific region.

The ripple effects of our partnership need not be limited to Asia. As Prime Minister Modi noted, the true power and potential in this relationship is that when the oldest and largest democracies come together, the world will benefit.

We will have our differences from time to time – close friends often do – but when we do have differences, it is imperative that we maintain a healthy dialogue. The successful Trade Policy Forum held just last week in New Delhi – the first since 2010 – and the recently established Civil-Nuclear Contact Group are examples of our collaborative, dialogue-driven approach when pursuing consensus in key areas. We can stand up for our interests, while not losing sight of the larger strategic interests that India and the U.S. share together.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will faithfully discharge my most fundamental responsibility: to promote and protect the welfare of American citizens in India. This includes providing a safe and secure work environment for the U.S. government employees and their families at Embassy New Delhi and our consulates in Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai. We value their distinguished service, and I intend to be their biggest advocate and supporter.

Mr. Chairman, let me say in closing that I am deeply appreciative of all those who have worked so hard on cultivating this relationship over many decades – the diplomats, development experts, security professionals, Members of Congress, and so many other dedicated public servants; but also the immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, those who took a chance like my parents, who worked hard, who continue to pursue their dreams, and along the way have helped ensure India and the United States become the closest of friends and partners. I will strive to live up to the high standards they have set.

Mr. Chairman, again, I appreciate the chance to be here today, and I look forward to your questions.