

Allison Hooker Opening Statement

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, distinguished Senators: thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am deeply honored to be nominated by the President to serve as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. If confirmed, I pledge to uphold the Constitution, serve the American people with integrity and purpose, and advance our nation's interests across the globe.

I would not be here today without my family, whose love and support have inspired and shaped my career in public service. In particular I would like to honor my father, Charles Oglethorpe Hooker, who served in the US Navy and then as a civil servant at Warner Robins Air Force Base next door to my hometown of Macon, Georgia. My father, who passed more than 30 years ago, served our country and the American people his entire life, setting an extraordinary example. He was my first inspiration to enter public service. My mother, Coralee Hooker, who instilled in me her powerful faith in Jesus Christ, has been my biggest cheerleader, reminding me always that with God all things are possible. My big sister, Charlene, who was the first in our family to attend college, set a high bar for me with her own achievements. She and my mother are unable to join me today due to illness. I am joined by my niece, Rebekah, and nephew, Allen. I also want to thank my pastors and friends who have also come today to show their support. I truly would not be here without their encouragement and love.

I was drawn to international affairs at an early age – as a high school student in the 1980s, I was struck by the Reagan Administration's policies of peace through strength and riveted by the world events that unfolded as the decade was drawing to a close. In particular, the Tiananmen Square Massacre in June 1989 and the fall of the Berlin wall later that year had a major impact and fueled that interest. I had no idea how I might pursue a career in foreign policy, but I certainly wanted to try. It was also that year that I went to Japan on a sister city exchange program. It was a trip that set the course for my life I am very grateful to have had that life-changing opportunity, and for the all the others that followed.

Since the first day I walked into the Department of State in January 2001 as a civil service new hire, I have devoted my career to advancing our country's national security, and I have immense respect for the strong, dynamic teams I have worked with over the years, both at the State Department and the White House. It is humbling to appear today before this committee, whose bipartisan work has

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long guided U.S. foreign policy through turbulent and transformative times. If confirmed, I would be honored to serve as Under Secretary of State at such a critical time for our foreign policy.

And what a critical time it is – from Great Power competition and conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, to flows of illegal migrants and drugs across our borders, to China seeking to reshape the global order – we live in a time of historic challenge. And we need a proactive foreign policy that serves America and its citizens by making our country safer, stronger, and more prosperous. I believe President Trump’s foreign policies will achieve these objectives.

Over the past two decades, I have served in a variety of roles across the U.S. government, most recently I had the privilege of serving as Director for Korea and later as Senior Director for Asia on the National Security Council during President Trump’s first term, where I helped shape and implement U.S. policy toward the Indo-Pacific at a time of unprecedented regional challenges and strategic change. In those positions, I saw the indispensable tool that diplomacy can be when it is firm, clear-eyed, and rooted in American strength – in other words, engagement when useful, pressure when necessary, and always in service of America’s interests.

My expertise in Northeast Asia – particularly on the Korean Peninsula – has taught me that the hardest problems in foreign policy are rarely solved overnight. Progress requires strategy, discipline, strength and consistency over time. It also demands diplomacy grounded in the realities of the world as it is, not simply as we wish it to be.

While my professional roots are in Asia, I fully recognize that if confirmed as Under Secretary, my charge will be global, and I am eager for this challenge. If confirmed, my priorities as Under Secretary would include:

First, strengthening our diplomatic workforce. The Department of State’s greatest asset is its people. We need a modern diplomatic corps that is ready to meet the challenges of a complex world. Our diplomatic statecraft must reflect American interests and ingenuity and take advantage of both diplomatic and economic opportunities around the world. To achieve these objectives, we must

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work to recruit top talent, using technology to make our work more efficient and impactful, and ensuring our diplomats around the world are safe.

Second, reinforcing our relationships with partners bilaterally and in multilateral fora. Even as we correct trade and security imbalances between the United States and the rest of the world, we must work together with allies and partners to address shared challenges. We also will work to ensure that any multilateral fora that we engage in have objectives that are consistent with U.S. interests and values.

Third, confronting our adversaries with strength and resolve. Diplomacy is not the absence of disagreements; it is how we manage them. That means defending American interests and applying pressure where needed – through sanctions, isolation, or deterrence – while always leaving the door open to engagement when it can advance and achieve American goals.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the Committee: I approach this role with gratitude, humility, realism, and resolve. If confirmed, I will dedicate myself to leading with integrity, listening to our allies and adversaries alike, and doing everything in my power to ensure that the American people are served well, and that diplomacy remains the cornerstone of our national security.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to your questions.