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Ambassador-designate to the Republic of Angola

Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

It is a privilege and an honor for me to appear before you today. I am deeply grateful to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for the trust and confidence they have placed in me as their nominee for Ambassador to the Republic of Angola. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to my wife, Laurel, who is with me here today, for her love and support as well as the sacrifices that she has made throughout my Foreign Service career.

Mr. Chairman, as you noted in your statement for the Congressional Record on June 24, Angola has made impressive strides in rebuilding after decades of war, yet it still faces challenges in order to realize its potential as a peaceful, prosperous, secure, and democratic nation playing an active role in the region. The United States has a major interest in ensuring that Angola succeeds in this quest.

Secretary Clinton's designation of Angola as one of three strategic partners in sub-Saharan Africa — along with South Africa and Nigeria — reflects Angola's growing importance to U. S. interests beyond its standing as our sixth largest supplier of imported oil. Secretary Clinton and Angola's Minister of Foreign Relations, Assuncao dos Anjos, formalized our Strategic Partnership Dialogue, or SPD, on July 8, marking a new chapter in our bilateral relations.

The SPD provides a comprehensive framework to engage Angola on energy, food security and other issues of mutual interest. This forum also advances our shared commitment to strengthening democratic institutions in Angola. To facilitate commercial ties with Angola, we signed an air services memorandum of understanding in April. We also launched a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement, or TIFA. The TIFA Council held its first meeting in June and developed a work plan to increase trade and investment.

On a separate front, the United States is assisting the Angolan government's demining efforts, which will help create jobs for Angolans by capitalizing on the country's vast arable land, only five percent of which is being used for agricultural development. If confirmed, I will advocate for continued support for this program, along with our countries' joint efforts to fight HIV/AIDS and malaria in

Angola. I also will encourage Angolan efforts to increase institutional capacity and to curb corruption. The 2012 presidential and legislative elections provide an opportunity to work with other stakeholders in promoting good governance and advocating for greater space for opposition voices and civil society.

The United States seeks to work with Angola as an emerging power capable of playing an active role in regional issues. If confirmed, I will urge Angola to play a constructive role in regional fora and to fulfill its commitments in the Kimberley Process (diamond) certification scheme. I also will give priority to my two overriding responsibilities: advancing U.S. interests and protecting American citizens. As a survivor of the 1998 bombing of our embassy in Tanzania, I can assure you of the importance that I attach to the well-being of our embassy personnel.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Committee in advancing our goals in Angola in a way that serves the interests of both countries. I thank you again for this opportunity and look forward to answering your questions.