

**Testimony of Alan Solomont
Ambassador-Designate to the Kingdom of Spain and the Principality of
Andorra
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
September 15, 2009**

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, for the privilege of appearing before you today. I would like to thank Senator Kerry and Senator Shaheen for their warm and generous introductions.

I am deeply honored to be nominated by President Obama to be the United States Ambassador to Spain and Andorra, and I am grateful beyond words to the President and to Secretary Clinton for placing their trust and confidence in me and for giving me this opportunity to serve.

None of us get here by ourselves. I would certainly not be here today without the love and support of my daughters Becca and Stephanie, or without my wife Susan, who has been my partner in life and who will be, if I am confirmed, my partner in Spain.

This is an auspicious time in our Nation's history. The President and the Congress have challenged American citizens to roll up their sleeves to help

solve the problems of their communities, of our Nation and of the world. I come before you as one of those citizens; nothing more but nothing less.

I was raised in an Orthodox Jewish home in Brookline, Massachusetts, but the values I learned from my parents of justice and compassion found their greatest expression in politics. I came of age in the 1960's, and after graduating from Tufts University, I moved to Lowell, Massachusetts and worked as a community organizer. There I met your late colleague Senator Paul Tsongas as well as a young Vietnam veteran who is now the distinguished Chairman of this Committee.

During those years, I earned another degree in nursing, and I fell unexpectedly into a business career. Over the next twenty years, I built a successful elder care company, but my passion for service and organizing never waned.

When my company was sold in the mid 1990's, I dedicated myself to service – in my own community and at the Corporation for National and Community Service.

I was appointed to the Corporation's bi-partisan Board of Directors by President Clinton, reappointed by President Bush, and elected to chair the Board in February. If confirmed, I will resign from this position, but I am grateful to have served at a time when support for national and community service has never been greater. This was evidenced by the substantial bi-partisan support in Congress for the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and by the President's commitment to making service a cause of his presidency. If confirmed, I hope to showcase this important American tradition at Embassy Madrid.

I also look forward to my first visit to Andorra, with whom the United States has enjoyed excellent relations since full diplomatic relations were established in 1995. Andorra joined the UN and the OSCE in 1993 and is a signatory to numerous international agreements. The 11 million tourists who flock there each year testify to Andorra's beauty and charm.

Spain is an important ally of the United States. Our histories and culture are intertwined, and so I believe is our future. If confirmed, I will continue efforts which stretch from our first Ambassador John Jay, appointed in 1779, to our most recent one, Eduardo Aguirre, to forge a strong partnership

between our two countries around our shared interests. As Spain assumes the Presidency of the European Union in January 2010, multilateral engagement with Spain will intensify as well.

Spain is a great success story and an example to other countries around the world. After a devastating civil war and a long period of dictatorship, Spain created a vibrant democracy and a prosperous economy, today the ninth largest in the world. The United States is the largest foreign investor in Spain, and Spanish investment has grown rapidly in the United States. Spain is a world leader in renewable energy and high-speed rail, areas in which expanded economic ties with the United States can produce great value for us.

Spain was been especially hard hit by the world economic crisis. This is causing particular stress in immigrant communities, which grew rapidly while the economy was strong. In just the last decade, over a million Muslim immigrants settled in Spain, and as President Obama noted in his Cairo speech, the United States seeks to build a partnership with Muslims around the world based on mutual interests and mutual respect. If confirmed, I will make it a priority to reach out to Spain's Muslim community and to a broad range of audiences, including other minorities and young people. I will be

proud to share America's experience with diversity, which are relatively new challenges for Spain.

In her recent speech to the Council on Foreign Relations, Secretary Clinton called on us to "reach out beyond governments, because we believe partnerships with people play a crucial role in our 21st century statecraft." If confirmed, I will focus our public diplomacy on strengthening the partnership between the people of our two countries. I will strive to put a face on America which showcases our values and which advances our interests and our global agenda.

There is much shared interest and common vision in our bilateral relationship. The Spanish share our commitment to uphold freedom, to fight terrorism and to alleviate poverty around the globe. They have their own personal experience with terrorism and extremism. That is one reason why Spain is a partner of ours in military and development activities in several of the world's trouble spots. They have troops on the ground in support of NATO's efforts in Afghanistan; they have provided ships to patrol the pirate-infested waters in the Gulf of Aden; and they allow us valuable access to their military bases

to support our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. If confirmed, I will work hard to enhance this military and development cooperation.

No Ambassador works alone. There is an extremely talented group of professionals advancing our national interests in Spain, led by an outstanding senior diplomat, Arnold Chacon. There is an equally skilled group at the State Department, from desk officers Alex McKnight and Stacie Zerdecki to Assistant Secretary Phillip Gordon, who provide expert guidance and support to our Mission in Spain.

Madam Chairwoman and members of the Committee, the opportunity to serve our country as Ambassador to Spain and Andorra is a great honor and a deep privilege. If confirmed, I pledge to represent the American people with the dignity, dedication and diligence that reflect the character of our great nation. If confirmed, I will bring to bear the full weight of my leadership ability, my management skills, and my passion for this mission to the important work of our Embassy in Madrid and our Consulate General in Barcelona.

Spain is a country that urgently desires a stronger partnership with the United States, and a strong partnership with Spain is in our national interest. If

confirmed, I will wake up every morning in active pursuit of that goal, and I will wake up every morning thankful to the President and to this great body for the opportunity to serve my country.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to your questions.