

Ann Stock
Assistant Secretary-Designate
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Opening Statement

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I would like to thank Senator Bayh, my home state Senator, for that generous introduction and for his many years of friendship. And I would like to acknowledge Ranking Member Lugar, who is also my home state Senator.

I am grateful to my family members here today – my son, Chase and daughter-in-law, Suvi. Stuart, my husband, is unfortunately traveling and could not be here today. Without all of their love and endless support, I would not be seated before you.

I want to say how honored I am by the trust and confidence that President Obama and Secretary Clinton have placed in me with this nomination to be Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

If I am confirmed, I look forward to being a part of their team. It would also be a privilege to advance our country's public diplomacy objectives,

under the leadership of Secretary Clinton, whom I have had known and respected for 17 years having worked closely with her during the Clinton Administration.

Two months ago, the Secretary hosted a State Department dinner for the 2009 Kennedy Center Honorees and she said something that stayed with me: “The same yearnings for human freedom and hope fill the hearts and minds of young men and women the world over, but we need a renewed commitment to reaching out to them with our values and our vitality and our belief in the future.”

That is precisely the spirit that will guide me if I am confirmed as Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

The mission of ECA is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through educational and cultural exchanges. I believe these initiatives are essential for achieving America’s foreign policy objectives and for strengthening America’s international leadership.

The impact of ECA’s programs is global. There are more than one million ECA alumni around the world and, each of them has been touched by America and Americans.

The 40,000 exchange participants engaged by ECA annually range from high school students to senior government officials, religious leaders and academics. Every member of Congress can be proud of their constituents who open their classrooms, workplaces, homes and hearts to exchange participants.

If confirmed, I will sustain and build on the Bureau's extraordinary record to address the challenges of today and to advance the priorities of this Administration, including but not limited to increasing opportunities for women and girls.

I also plan to expand the reach and effectiveness of the Bureau's English language programs, a key priority for Secretary Clinton.

I believe the following are essential strategic directions for ECA:

- Focusing on youth, especially the underserved;
- Expanding educational opportunities, including through the Fulbright program;
- Enhancing cultural exchanges;
- Leveraging new media to amplify ECA's programs; and,

- Sustaining and nurturing long-term relationships with alumni to continue the positive impact from these programs.

In pursuing these approaches, educational and cultural engagement—like all of Public Diplomacy’s tools—will be tied to achieving America’s foreign policy objectives, with resources allocated in line with strategic priorities. These forms of interaction not only constitute core strengths of American international engagement but also contribute significantly to the new beginnings based on mutual respect and understanding strongly advocated by President Obama.

My background suits me well for the considerable responsibilities of Assistant Secretary. For twelve years at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, I have had the privilege of working closely with the Department of State and ECA on exchange programs. This has allowed me not only to interact with Ambassadors, Public Affairs Officers, Ministers of Culture and arts leaders, but also to witness first-hand how exchange programs can positively influence both lives and institutions. If I am afforded the opportunity to lead ECA, I can’t imagine better preparation.

In conclusion, let me cite the words of President Obama from his speech in Egypt: “All of us share this world for a brief moment in time. The

question is whether we spend that time focused on what pushes us apart, or whether we commit ourselves to an effort – a sustained effort – to find common ground, to focus on the future we seek for our children, and to respect the dignity of all human beings.”

All sectors of American society and government are focused on this profound challenge and, I believe exchanges are a key element. In exchanges, we rely on and engage our single greatest asset—the American citizen.

When you meet Americans, you meet American values. Exchanges are a quintessentially American form of diplomacy that, if confirmed, I would hope to increase, to amplify, and to sustain in a lasting and meaningful way.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.