

**Testimony of Mark H. Gitenstein**  
**Ambassador-Designate to Romania**  
**July 7, 2009**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

Madame Chairwoman and Members of the Committee,

I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to Romania. I want to thank President Obama, Vice President Biden and Secretary Clinton for their support throughout this process and for their confidence in me.

Madame Chairwoman, I am a Romanian-American. My great grandparents immigrated to America in the 1890s from Romania. If I am confirmed, I will be proud to be the first Romanian-American to hold this post.

The story of Romania in the past two decades is a remarkable one – from a Soviet satellite to one of our most loyal and dependable allies in the region; and from a struggling government-managed market to what was the fastest growing economy in Europe before the world-wide recession hit. Fourteen Romanian soldiers have given their lives in Afghanistan and Iraq, and three times that number have been wounded. Romania's commitment to this effort has earned it a place alongside other steadfast allies.

Romanians share our strategic goals and place a priority on being a reliable NATO ally. They have joined us not only in fighting terrorism but on such critical issues as ensuring Europe's energy security and protecting vulnerable refugees from crisis zones throughout the world.

Romania became a part of the European Union in 2007 and moved quickly to reshape its economy to attract investment and spur growth. After several years of rapid growth, the economy is now in recession with a projected 4.1 percent contraction for this year. The leadership of Romania deserves praise for addressing immediate stability concerns by concluding an IMF-led relief package this spring that, coupled with measured policies, will promote stability and a faster recovery.

There is a significant U.S. business presence in Romania, but we can and should do more. If confirmed, one of my highest priorities as ambassador will be to improve the environment for U.S. businesses and to increase trade between our two countries.

Key to that effort will be convincing Romania to invest the resources needed to fight corruption, increase transparency, reform fiscal controls, and cement an independent judiciary and regulatory apparatus. Romania will not be able to attract long-term investment dollars without ensuring fairness to U.S. companies in terms of approvals, payments and reimbursements as they fulfill their contractual commitments. These are issues I know well from my 17 years working for then Senator Biden and others on the staffs of the Senate Intelligence and Judiciary Committees.

Resumption of international adoptions remains a priority of the United States, in particular the so-called “pipeline” cases. I can’t imagine how heart-wrenching it must be for parents to work so hard to identify a needy child to take into their home, only to suffer years of separation from them with no idea when they can be reunited.

Finally, it is particularly heartening to see the genuine commitment expressed by leaders like President Basescu to eradicate anti-Semitism and end discrimination against the Roma people. If confirmed, I will be honored to be present at the planned dedication in Bucharest this fall of a Holocaust memorial. I was also pleased to see the Romanian government rescue Roma harassed in Ireland last month. However, we have work to continue with Romania in areas such as property restitution.

In closing I would like to recognize my wife Libby. She is the love of my life and I am confident she will be the best ambassador’s spouse. She is not only fearless, eager and compassionate but as a visiting nurse and a crisis counselor she brings invaluable experience to the American community in Bucharest. My three children Rebecca, Ben and Sarah and their families, including two grandsons, Sam and Max, share Lib’s enthusiasm for this new challenge.

I would be happy to respond to your questions.

