

Statement of Roger F. Nyhus
Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to Barbados, the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
May 4, 2023

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished Members of the committee. I am grateful to appear before you as President Biden’s nominee to be the U.S. ambassador to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean. If confirmed, I would represent the United States and the American people in seven island nations.

I would like to thank the two senators from my home state of Washington – Senator Maria Cantwell and Senator Patty Murray – for their support. I am especially grateful to Sen. Cantwell for her leadership, kind introduction, and partnership over many years.

Rural America

I am the proud product of rural America. I grew up in Westport, Washington, a small fishing and tourist town on the Pacific Ocean. Oceans and coastal communities are in my blood. I am the son of a Native American Mom and a Norwegian-American fisherman Dad. My family fished for salmon, tuna, Dungeness and king crab, shrimp, and bottom fish, frequently miles off the Pacific Coast for days or weeks at a time.

Family

My tribe – the Chinook Indian Nation – is legendary. My ancestors greeted explorers Lewis and Clark at the mouth of the mighty Columbia River more than 200 years ago. Chinook means “strong fighter,” and, if confirmed, I commit to being a strong fighter for the United States, the American people, our strategic interests and democratic values, as well as our shared priorities in the Eastern Caribbean.

Private Sector Experience

I am from the nation’s most trade-dependent state. Throughout my career, I have been a strong and effective advocate for international trade and economic development in rural, urban, and diverse communities. I have represented numerous clients in advancing global commercial engagement and people-to-people exchange.

Over three decades, I grew my strategic communications business to represent Seattle’s most successful and impactful Fortune 500 companies, startups, and nonprofits. I advised organizations on how to navigate complex business issues, manage crises, and grow in the United States and overseas. If confirmed, I am eager to put my private sector expertise and connections to use for the American people.

Post Priorities

This U.S. ambassadorship is unique in the world - representing the United States to seven sovereign nations right here in our own hemisphere. The countries of the Eastern Caribbean—Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St.

Vincent and the Grenadines—comprise a vital political and economic region. Due to their close geographic proximity and our shared historical and cultural ties, these countries play an outsized role in many important areas.

If confirmed, my priorities are clear:

First, hundreds of thousands of American tourists visit the Eastern Caribbean each year. If confirmed, my paramount duty will be to ensure the safety and security of these visitors as well as the many thousands of Americans who call the region home. This includes addressing the illegal trafficking of narcotics, people, and guns in the region. Specifically, I will work to deepen our security and law enforcement partnerships with the Eastern Caribbean through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative.

Second, I will ensure that the United States effectively competes with the People's Republic of China and remains the partner of choice in the Eastern Caribbean. These seven countries are on the frontlines of Beijing's global power projection through ever-expanding trade, investment ties and diplomatic presence, as well as the PRC's ongoing push to limit Taiwan international engagement. I will work to be a strong advocate for our positive U.S. agenda, and an active and visible countering force to the PRC's efforts.

Third, these small island nations are facing unique and evolving climate and energy challenges. I am committed to working with each country on specific solutions employing American technology and innovation, and through U.S. initiatives such as the Partnership to Address the Climate Crisis (PACC 2030). It is in our national interest to help these nations become more resilient to the effects of climate change and support their transition to renewable fuels, including by increasing their access to finance.

Finally, drawing on my broad private sector experience, if confirmed, I would support U.S. business interests in the region and help identify new and expanded opportunities for American innovation and investment.

Conclusion

If confirmed, I look forward to leading the strong and experienced team of professionals at the mission and collaborating closely with this committee and its staff. Together, we will advance U.S. interests and benefit the American people in this important region so close to our shores. I am happy to answer your questions. Thank you.