

**OPENING STATEMENT
SENATOR RICHARD LUGAR
HEARING ON AMBASSADORIAL NOMINEES
JULY 30, 2003**

The Foreign Relations Committee meets today to hear testimony from four distinguished ambassadorial nominees.

We are pleased to welcome Jeffrey A. Marcus, who has been nominated to be U.S. Ambassador to Belgium; Constance A. Morella, who has been nominated to be U.S. Representative to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development with the rank of Ambassador; Jackie Wolcott Sanders, who has been nominated to the rank of Ambassador during her tenure as U.S. Representative to the Conference on Disarmament and Special Representative of the President for Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; and, finally, George H. Walker, who has been nominated to be U.S. Ambassador to Hungary.

The Committee also welcomes Senators who are here to introduce the nominees. We are honored by your presence, and we appreciate the strong support that you are giving to these nominees.

These nominations are important. Foreign governments watch carefully how this Committee addresses nominees with responsibilities for their regions. The absence of high-ranking State Department officials or Ambassadors for extended periods can weaken relations with other nations, hinder our ability to gather accurate information, and hurt the morale of affected staff.

We should proceed carefully and thoughtfully as we evaluate diplomatic nominations. But we should proceed with dispatch. Nominations must not be delayed by inattention, bureaucratic arguments, or political motivations. The Committee is holding this hearing this morning to encourage the Senate to move forward on these nominations as soon as possible.

We will proceed first with the Senators' introductions of the nominees. Following the introductions, we will invite the nominees to make opening statements and to introduce any family members that they may have brought with them today. We will then have a period for questions from the Committee.

I propose that we now proceed with the introductions of our nominees, beginning with Senators Hutchison and Cornyn, who will introduce Mr. Marcus.

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