

Dick Lugar

U.S. Senator for Indiana

Date: 07/22/2010 • <http://lugar.senate.gov>
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Lugar introduction of nominee for Ambassador to Azerbaijan

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Dick Lugar made the following statement at today's hearing.

I welcome all of our nominees today. I have reviewed each nominee's credentials and believe that this panel is superbly qualified to represent the United States at our various embassies in Europe and Eurasia.

It is my pleasure to introduce Matthew Bryza, the President's nominee to be Ambassador to Azerbaijan. This nomination comes after a lapse in ambassadorial representation in Baku. I am concerned that the continuing absence of a Senate-confirmed U.S. representative there could impede progress toward several U.S. national security goals.

Our Committee has worked closely with our Envoy for Eurasian Energy, Ambassador Richard Morningstar, to promote the expansion of the Nabucco pipeline, the key element of a southern energy corridor that would stretch from the Caspian region to Europe. Progress on this measure will allow our allies to diversify energy supplies, while providing nations in the region with a focus for closer cooperation. The Nabucco pipeline's commercial and political viability will depend on both Azerbaijan's commitment of its indigenous resources and its willingness to serve as a transport hub for Central Asian energy across the Caspian from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and possibly other countries.

A close partnership with Azerbaijan and other nations in the South Caucasus will also be essential to ensure the transit of supplies to our troops in the Middle East and to resolve complex disputes concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave. The ongoing success of Nunn-Lugar efforts to renovate biological reference facilities and modernize the Azerbaijani coast guard also will require the close attention of our next Ambassador in Baku.

Matthew Bryza is uniquely qualified to advance these U.S. priorities. He possesses exceptional knowledge of the region, having spent the last thirteen years working on U.S. foreign policy in Europe and the Caucasus from both the White House and State Department.

I have known and worked with Matt for much of this period. His personal efforts have been fundamental to improved relations among nations in the Caucasus and to improved energy security. I have benefited a great deal from his counsel on Nabucco and other energy projects, and have appreciated his candor and humor. In my experience, Matt has skillfully advanced U.S. interests by taking a balanced approach to our relationships in this complex region, and he has not hesitated to point out the shortcomings of regional leaders in the areas of democratic development, human rights, and press freedom.

Prompt confirmation of Mr. Bryza, as well as our other nominees today, will ensure that our important relationships in Europe will receive the attention they deserve and advance numerous U.S. interests in the region.

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