

Testimony of Norman Eisen
Ambassador-Designate to the Czech Republic
July 22, 2010
Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

It is a privilege to be here as President Obama's nominee to become the next United States' Ambassador to the Czech Republic. I am honored to have the confidence and trust of the President and Secretary Clinton in representing our country. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I would like to introduce my wife, Lindsay Kaplan, an Associate Professor of English at Georgetown University and our daughter Tamar. Lindsay is a distinguished scholar of Shakespeare and Tamar is a distinguished scholar of fun. I feel very fortunate to share life's adventures with them and if confirmed, I know the Czech people will come to appreciate them as I do.

I am a first-generation American and have the particular love for this country of those whose families found shelter here. My mother was born in then-Czechoslovakia and my father in Poland. Like most immigrants throughout our Nation's history, my parents worked terribly hard in our small family business. Neither had a formal education, but our home in Los Angeles was rich in conversation, culture and memory. My mother tells me that some of my first words were in Czech, as I repeated back the Czech lullabies she sang me. I grew up hearing of my mother's warm friendships with the Czech people; of their beloved President Tomas Masaryk, his American wife, and his friendship with our American President, Woodrow Wilson; of my mother's visits to the most beautiful city in the world, "zlatá praha," "Golden Prague"; and of the other wonders of Czech culture like the music of Dvorak (whose famous New World Symphony was actually composed right here in the USA). I heard darker stories too, of the Nazi invasion and of my mother's survival in Auschwitz, as well as the inspiring tale of my parents' new start in the U.S.

In 1975, when I was just 14, my father died and I left high school to help support my family. After two years, I returned to get my degree, and was the first in my family to graduate from high school, college and from law school. I am indebted to my country for these extraordinary opportunities, and I have attempted to repay that debt throughout my career. In my first job, I worked to promote the civil rights

of all Americans at the Anti-Defamation League. As an attorney and then a partner at Zuckerman Spaeder, I fought for justice whether representing plaintiffs or defendants, individuals or governments. And as the co-founder of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, and more recently, as the Special Counsel to the President for Ethics and Government Reform, I have endeavored to make our union a more perfect one.

My family history is to some extent a metaphor for our nation's deep ties with the Czech Republic, which in the 21 years since the Velvet Revolution has transformed itself into a vibrant democracy, a thriving market economy, a solid EU member and a staunch NATO ally. The Czech Republic is a loyal friend in the heart of Europe that we must never take for granted. The Czech Republic works with us toward common goals in Afghanistan, in the Balkans, on energy security and on human rights around the world. Why?

Simply put, because of the values our two countries share: love of democracy and commitment to a free market system that promises all citizens a chance to prosper. Our shared values were evident when Presidents Wilson and Masaryk worked together to create then-Czechoslovakia after World War I, including the signing of the Pittsburgh Declaration here in the US. They survived Nazi occupation—an occupation ended in part by General Patton's liberation of Western Bohemia. They survived the long period of Communist oppression, when the U.S. supported Czech dissidents. They are, thankfully, fully manifest now. If confirmed, I will work from the base of those values to forge common strategies and joint projects that will cement our bilateral ties.

An active NATO member since 1999, the Czech Republic has over 400 troops deployed in Afghanistan. The Czech Republic operates a highly regarded Provincial Reconstruction Team in Logar Province, a very active operational area where civilians from Czech NGOs work with the Afghan people to build infrastructure, good governance, and the rule of law. In addition to deployments to Afghanistan, Czech soldiers serve in the NATO mission in Kosovo. If confirmed, I will work to further strengthen such strategic cooperation and encourage the Czech Republic to maintain such cooperation.

Economically, the Czech Republic has a strong manufacturing base, a capable and educated workforce, and a stable financial system. The United States is the Czech Republic's fifth-largest foreign investor and an important trading partner with \$6.6 billion of U.S. investment since 1993. If confirmed, I will seek to expand our bilateral economic ties. I will focus on this important trade relationship and seek to

increase business opportunities for U.S. companies in the Czech Republic by, for example, marshalling all of our resources to support Westinghouse's bid for the Temelin nuclear power plant tender, and providing direction to Czech companies that want to invest in the United States. If confirmed, I will be an advocate for transparency and the rule of law as the Czech Republic improves its business environment and strengthens its economy. If confirmed, I will also work to expand our bilateral cooperation in science, technology, and research and development.

The Czech commitment to energy security springs from a belief that reliable access to energy is fundamental to economic growth and should be the right of every nation. The 2009 Russia-Ukraine gas dispute underscored the difficulty of reliance on a single source for energy. In addition, it highlighted the need to build cross-border interconnections within the internal EU gas market. If confirmed, I will work to help the Czech Republic increase its energy security by supporting projects designed to diversify energy sources and routes, including the Southern Corridor which would bring Caspian gas to Europe for the first time; increase interconnection of internal EU gas and electricity networks; promote greater market transparency; and support U.S. energy technology solutions, including nuclear energy, to enhance Czech energy security.

If confirmed, I will encourage the Czech government to continue its efforts to ensure that all Czech citizens, irrespective of their origin or faith, enjoy the same rights and opportunities, including the Roma people. I will encourage the government to continue to strengthen its capacities in the fight against extremism, with respect for human rights and the rule of law, through law enforcement and education.

If confirmed, I will work tirelessly with the talented interagency team at Embassy Prague and take every opportunity to engage with the Czech people and their government to advance our common goals and values. I will engage in active public diplomacy, inviting the Czechs into our historic Embassy and Residence but also getting out and about both within magnificent Prague and throughout the beautiful lands of the Czech Republic.

I am so honored to be asked to represent our country and our government.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you. I welcome any questions you may have.