

Statement of Morrell John Berry
United States Ambassador-Designate to Australia
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 23, 2013

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, it is a great honor. I am deeply grateful to President Obama for his confidence in nominating me to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Australia. If confirmed, I promise that I will work tirelessly in service to our country.

For the past four years, I have had the distinct privilege of serving as the President's Chief People Person as head of the Office of Personnel Management. OPM is a relatively small agency, but it has a broad reach and a tremendously important mission – to recruit, retain, and honor a world-class workforce. In my role at OPM, I traveled throughout the country meeting with students and universities, veterans, employee groups, tribal communities, Fortune 500 companies, affinity groups, and civil servants. Every day, across our government and private sector, I witnessed remarkable innovations and accomplishments. I saw first-hand the dedication and hard work of men and women committed to making our nation and our world a better place.

Along the way, I was reminded again and again of the tremendous diversity of our great country, building lasting relationships with fellow Americans from all backgrounds as we worked together to address shared challenges. If confirmed, I will carry with me these many voices of America, along with a profound commitment to strengthening the shared values that lie at the heart of our strategic relationship with Australia.

America is a Pacific nation, and, if confirmed, I would be the second generation of Berrys to serve our country in the Pacific. My father, Morrell Berry, fought in the First Marine Division at Guadalcanal, at Cape Gloucester in Papua New Guinea, and as a Marine gunnery sergeant aboard the USS *Bon Homme Richard*. My uncle Jack, for whom I am named, served as a U.S. Marine fighter pilot during World War II and was killed in action over the Philippines. My partner, Curtis Yee, is a fourth generation Chinese American from Hawaii, and his uncle Hiram Fong was Hawaii's

first U.S. Senator and the first Chinese American Senator. As a result, the nomination to serve as a U.S. Ambassador in the Asia-Pacific region has deep meaning to my family and to me.

As proud as America's past has been in the Pacific, our future promises only to be brighter. President Obama and both Secretaries Clinton and Kerry have made clear that America will remain fully engaged in the Asia-Pacific region in the 21st century, using our alliances for mutual good. Without question, one of the United States' greatest alliances is with Australia.

If confirmed, my overarching goals as Ambassador to Australia are threefold—

First, I will work to strengthen our strategic alliance with Australia, which has served as an anchor of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and the world for more than sixty years.

America could not ask for a better friend, partner, and ally than Australia. Our relationship is built on a solid foundation of trust, proven under fire, and steeled by deeply-held shared values. From World War I to the present day, America has never entered a major battle without Australians firmly by our side. Thousands of Australians have made the ultimate sacrifice, laying down their lives alongside our own brave servicemen and women in pursuit of freedom and a better world.

America is profoundly grateful for Australia's sacrifices in pursuit of our common purposes. We are especially appreciative that after 9/11, Australia stepped forward to help us counter terrorism in Afghanistan, and we honor the 40 proud Australians who have fallen in combat there. I would ask, Mr. Chairman, that I be allowed to enter the names of those brave soldiers in the official record of this hearing.

The U.S.-Australia defense and security relationship is rock solid. Right now in northern Australia, more than 30,000 U.S. and Australian service members are taking to the sea, land, and sky as part of Exercise TALISMAN SABER 2013 – a biennial combined training activity designed to improve the combat readiness and interoperability of our forces.

As part of the force posture initiatives announced by President Obama in November 2011, U.S. Marines are also conducting exercises and training on a rotational basis with the Australian Defence Force in Darwin and Northern Australia, which will enable both countries to join with other partners to respond in a timely and effective manner to a range of contingencies in the Asia-Pacific, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in the region. The President summed it up succinctly: “The United States is a Pacific power, and we are here to stay.”

If confirmed, I pledge to do everything in my power to strengthen our strategic alliance and to ensure that we are fully prepared to work together to respond to the challenges of tomorrow, whether they are on land or at sea, in space, or in cyberspace.

Second, if confirmed, I will endeavor to increase our mutual trade and investment.

The United States has \$136 billion in direct investments in Australia, more than in any other country in the Asia-Pacific and more than twice the value of our investments in China. Our bilateral Free Trade Agreement has resulted in impressive returns benefitting both countries – bilateral trade in goods and services has increased by nearly 98 percent since 2004, topping \$64 billion in 2012. Australia is a key center of operations for many U.S. companies, and their work there brings technology and capital into Australia, and creates jobs and enhances our exports sector here at home.

Today, we are also working with Australia to conclude the Trans Pacific Partnership, the ambitious, next-generation, trade agreement that reflects our shared economic priorities and values and whose members span the Asia-Pacific.

If confirmed, I will work to strengthen our economic relationship with Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

Finally, if confirmed, I will strive to further deepen our cultural, scientific, and conservation cooperation.

The United States and Australia share strong people-to-people ties, with some 400,000 Americans visiting Australia and around one million Australians visiting the United States last year alone. Academic exchanges

are a critical part of our relationship with Australia. From food security and linguistics to oncology and renewable energy, students and scholars are bringing our countries ever closer together through cooperative innovations in the service of all humankind.

The United States and Australia share common objectives – a world that respects human rights and the rule of law; benefits from transparent, free, fair and open trade; and settles differences peacefully. We share a deep and abiding love of liberty and freedom. We both draw strength from our rich diversity and pride ourselves on providing opportunity or a “fair go” for all. Our bonds with Australia are truly unbreakable.

At the Australian Parliament House in 2011, President Obama delivered his clarion message on the Asia-Pacific region and the United States’ commitments there. He stressed that the U.S.-Australia “alliance continues to be indispensable to our future,” and that, “[i]n the Asia Pacific in the 21st century, the United States of America is all in.”

To conclude, I am deeply honored to be nominated for the position of U.S. Ambassador to Australia, and welcome the opportunity to lend my experience, passion, and dedication to enhancing our relationship with one of our strongest allies and partners, and to cementing the United States’ commitment to the Asia Pacific.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and stand ready to answer any questions that you and other Members may have.