

Testimony of Kirk Wagar
Ambassador-designate to the Republic of Singapore
Before the
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 30, 2013

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, it is an honor and a humbling experience to appear before you as the President Obama's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Republic of Singapore. I am blessed to be a citizen of the greatest nation on Earth. I came here as an 18 year old student – the first member of my family to attend college – and from that time, this country has provided me with my family, my education, my career, my home, and numerous opportunities to serve in our political process. My story is not possible anywhere else in the world.

I would like to first thank President Obama for the faith he has shown in me with this tremendous responsibility and assure this Committee that I do not take it lightly. I also want to thank my dear friend Senator Nelson not only for his far too generous words, but also his friendship and leadership on behalf of my family and all Florida's families. We could not ask for a more dedicated and gracious champion and his example is one I have followed and will follow every day. If the Committee would allow, I would like to recognize my family. I was adopted at four months old into the most loving of families, and, while my parents could not be with us today, I must acknowledge that it is because of their guidance and strength that I have achieved anything in my time on this planet. Lastly, I would like to introduce my brilliant and wonderful wife, Crystal Wagar. From her Midwestern roots to her unparalleled work ethic, Crystal serves as a model and inspiration everyday and her willingness to embark on this adventure on behalf of the country we so dearly love ensures that we both will do the best job possible on behalf of the American people.

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, it would be an honor to serve my country as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Singapore.

Singapore is one of our strongest partners in the region – a region that President Obama has made clear is a priority for our future. There are three main pillars to our comprehensive and productive relationship with Singapore. The historic foundation of the relationship is our dynamic and robust defense cooperation. Few countries surpass Singapore as a partner and friend to the United States on our defense priorities in the region. Singapore is eager to have interoperable equipment, facilities, and processes that make it easy for us to cooperate with them on a broad range of activities. We recently forward deployed to Singapore on a rotational basis the first of the U.S. Navy Littoral Combat Ships, which serves as an example of the depth of our shared interest in peace and prosperity in the region. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to keep this relationship moving full steam ahead on a positive trajectory.

The second pillar of our relationship is the economic cooperation we have with Singapore bilaterally, regionally, and globally. The U.S.-Singapore Free Trade Agreement was our first FTA in Asia. This bilateral FTA set high standards and broke new ground for our future FTAs. Since entering into force in 2004, bilateral trade has flourished, increasing almost 60 percent. U.S. investment in Singapore is twice what we have in China and five times our investment in India. By many, many measures, this is America's best performing FTA, and we are building on that success as we partner with Singapore in the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations. The TPP will create a 21st century trade and investment agreement among a dozen countries that make up almost 40 percent of the global GDP. If confirmed, I will work with Singapore to successfully complete the TPP negotiations this year if possible and to ensure the TPP's full implementation. Singapore has a remarkable, open economy with strong protection for intellectual property rights. It is no secret why over 2,000 American companies base their regional headquarters in Singapore. Taking this success and building on it in the region will be an exciting challenge for me.

Our cooperation with Singapore on law enforcement and homeland security issues is the third pillar of our relationship. Our law enforcement cooperation with Singapore over the years has successfully used the available tools and resources, but it is time to update this cooperation to use 21st century tools to combat the 21st century challenges that face us. There is untapped potential in our partnership with Singapore as we confront the global challenges of cybercrime, illicit finance,

counterproliferation, and trafficking in persons. I look forward to working with Singapore, if confirmed, on coming up with modern and mutually beneficial solutions to the problems of the present and of the future. I want to see our non-military security cooperation elevated to the same parity we have on our military and economic cooperation.

Finally, I came to this country because of the values that make America great: freedom, equality, opportunity. Those values will be intertwined throughout all that I will do if confirmed. Through our strong people-to-people exchange programs and my own personal public diplomacy efforts, we will continuously represent these values with dignity, sensitivity, and humility. I consider working to increase respect for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms a key element of the job of an ambassador and pledge to make sure that human rights is squarely on the Embassy's agenda if confirmed. It would be my distinct honor to serve as Ambassador to Singapore on behalf of this great country that has given me everything.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Rubio, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify before you today and for giving my nomination your serious consideration. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.