

**Statement of Alexa Lange Wesner
Ambassador-Designate to Austria
Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

July 30, 2013

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

I am honored to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Austria.

I am deeply grateful for the confidence and trust that President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me. I am humbled by this opportunity, and if confirmed, I will proudly represent our country abroad.

With the Chairman's permission, I would like to acknowledge the family members who have joined me today. I particularly wish to thank my husband, Blaine, for his unwavering support in this new endeavor. I would also like to recognize my three young children, Natalie, Tennyson, and Livia, who are with their grandparents today. My children continue to inspire me to enter public service just as they inspired me to take leadership positions in the non-profit sector, a segment of society that has helped strengthen our country's democracy through the promotion of civic values.

I come before you today as an accomplished businesswoman. If confirmed, I will bring to our Embassy in Vienna more than fifteen years of founding leadership in business and not-for-profit endeavors. My professional experience has deepened my appreciation for international trade and global economic vitality. This experience will serve me well in promoting U.S. exports and advocating for U.S. firms doing business in Austria. I will also bring to bear my passion for cultivating business and social entrepreneurship. If confirmed, I will draw upon all my knowledge and experience to successfully advance U.S. interests in Austria and enhance our strong cooperation with this important partner.

If confirmed, I will give the highest priority to ensuring the safety of U.S. citizens living, working, and traveling in Austria. I will also seek opportunities to enhance our cooperation and mutual understanding on international security issues, as Austria plays an important role in international peace and stability. Austria

contributes to peacekeeping missions around the world, most notably in the Balkans and Lebanon. Austria also contributes personnel to the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan, and has pledged resources through 2017 to help sustain the Afghan National Security Forces following the 2014 security transition. I will encourage Austria to continue to contribute to these important security efforts. If confirmed, I also look forward to continuing our productive dialogue with Austria to promote the stability, democracy, prosperity, and Euro-Atlantic integration efforts of the countries of the Western Balkans region.

While our approaches to regional and international issues may differ at times, the United States and Austria share many common values and perspectives. These include a commitment to reducing the threats posed by climate change and nuclear proliferation, and the promotion of economic development and environmental sustainability through new and renewable energy supplies. We also share an agenda of broad support for human rights and the rule of law, stabilization in the Western Balkans, and a common vision of peace and freedom for all. To build upon these commonalities, if confirmed, I will draw on my ability to build strong partnerships for a common cause, uniting the force of government with the private sector and NGOs. In addition, it is my hope that I can help further Austria's dedicated pursuit of a tolerant and inclusive society.

Both the United States and Austria currently occupy seats on the UN Human Rights Council. This gives our two countries real opportunities to ensure that our mutual aims of global security, prosperity, and the protection of human rights are achieved together. If confirmed, I will work with Austria to encourage the leadership and innovation it takes to strike that important balance.

Austria is a great friend to the United States. Indeed, this year we are celebrating the 175th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our two countries. We have strong trade and investment in both directions. We are bound together through myriad people-to-people contacts in business, the arts, education, tourism, and a host of other exchanges. If confirmed, I pledge to do my best in advancing America's interests and values. I look forward to working with this Committee and Congress in that effort.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.