

**STATEMENT OF EVAN RYAN, NOMINEE TO BE ASSISTANT  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL  
AFFAIRS  
JULY 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ranking Member Corker, for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am honored to be considered by the Senate for this important position -- and I am grateful for the trust and confidence that President Obama and Secretary Kerry have placed in me with this nomination to be Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. If confirmed, I look forward to joining the Administration's foreign policy team. It would be a privilege to advance our country's public diplomacy goals under the leadership of Secretary Kerry, whose commitment to solving global challenges by bringing people together has been unwavering throughout his career.

The mission of ECA is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of countries around the world through educational and cultural exchanges. International exchanges enjoy broad bipartisan support in Congress. ECA's wide range of programs and initiatives continue to capitalize on American strengths and ideals -- the near universal appeal of our education system, our culture and values, our entrepreneurs and innovators, our scientists, athletes, and thinkers. Through these programs, the State Department is building ties to emerging leaders around the world. ECA is the lifeblood of public diplomacy--establishing the personal relationships that become the foundation of international partnerships.

My background draws me to the mission of the Bureau and has prepared me for the considerable responsibilities of Assistant Secretary. For the past four years, as the Assistant to Vice President Biden for Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs, my work focused on bringing people together from across America -- including law enforcement and labor, state and local elected officials, business and religious leaders, educators and community activists -- on a broad range of issues. I built and strengthened

constituencies and saw the power of shared ideas in advancing the Administration's goals. These constituencies remain deeply engaged with foreign exchange participants, share invaluable expertise, and host them in our communities. If confirmed, I will see that the American people remain at the heart of ECA exchanges.

I have also seen the power of people to people exchanges overseas through serving on the Board of Directors of Peace Players and working with the Education Partnership for Children of Conflict. When you bring people together through areas of mutual interest, you open lines of communication and build trust that is essential for solving long-term challenges. In Northern Ireland, South Africa and Israel, Peace Players uses sports to bring together children of different races, religions and ethnicities. Thanks to the opening made through this sports exchange, children learn that what they have in common far outweighs the differences that divide their communities.

The Education Partnership for Children of Conflict helps make sure that children whose lives are disrupted by war still have access to schools, books and teachers. War can produce a lost generation; the Partnership promotes education and offers opportunities to overcome divisions that lead to conflict in the first place.

These experiences instilled in me a conviction that, through education, culture and sports, the United States can help defuse conflict, bring people together and build partnerships to face global challenges. We must continue to find creative ways to connect with people around the world. Exchange programs open doors.

With citizens increasingly able to shape local and even global events, ECA's mission is more vital now than ever. Annually, ECA engages 350,000 exchange participants and is connected with more than 1 million ECA alumni – including 365 who became leaders of their countries, 54 who won Nobel Prizes and many more who returned to become leaders in their chosen fields. This is the legacy of flagship programs like Fulbright, founded in 1946, and the International Visitor Leadership Program, which was started by Nelson Rockefeller who invited Latin American journalists who came to the United States to learn about freedom of speech and democratic values.

ECA's international program participants get to see America first-hand. They live

and work here and return to their own countries and share their new skills and understanding. The impact is global. Participants are from every part of society. They are high school and university students, emerging leaders, entrepreneurs, journalists, activists, government officials, religious leaders, and academics from every class and background. ECA is connecting with new audiences and empowering youth, women, minorities, and underserved communities—the world’s future problem-solvers.

Equally important is the impact of ECA exchange programs on the United States. We live in a globalized world, and providing Americans international experiences makes our country stronger – better able to understand, cooperate and compete. When ECA sends Americans abroad they become ambassadors for our nation. They often study, work, and live with people who have never met an American. Through ECA programs, Americans learn about other cultures and gain skills needed to succeed in a global marketplace.

And, every day, in every state, your constituents demonstrate American values to exchange participants through their hospitality. They open their classrooms, workplaces, homes, and hearts to people from nearly 190 countries. From their hometowns, they are sharing the best of America with the world.

By linking Americans together with people from around the world, we can develop lasting relationships and partnerships that overcome political and cultural differences. And there is a tangible benefit, too: last year, international students contributed \$23 billion to the U.S. economy.

If I am confirmed, I will sustain and build on the Bureau's extraordinary record of connecting with youth, women, emerging leaders, and the underserved to address the challenges of today and invest in the future of America’s global relationships.

For example, I am committed to engaging youth from every region and background because 65 percent of the world’s population is under 30. I know the transformative impact new ideas and experiences have on a young person. We have to be in the business of talent scouting around the world, finding emerging leaders, empowering them to fulfill their dreams, and building a long-term relationship with the

people of the United States. If confirmed, I am excited to bolster and expand ECA programs like the Youth Ambassadors, which started in Latin America and has brought young people throughout the hemisphere together to promote mutual understanding, increase leadership skills, and prepare youth to make a difference in their communities. And to support the President's Young African Leaders Initiative, by bringing young Africans to the United States for summer leadership institutes at U.S. colleges and universities, and providing opportunities for them to network and contribute to their country's future when they return home.

It is also essential that ECA connect with young people in vulnerable communities. ECA programs are a bridge to opportunities, alternative narratives, and a marketplace of ideas for the next generation. These relationships are an investment in our shared futures.

If confirmed, I would look to continue expanding the reach of the Bureau's English language programs to build on the strong global demand for English language proficiency. English language skills connect young people to America, open doors, develop communities, and allow people to enter the global economy. This is a priority for the President and will have an impact far into the future. To cite just one example, already ECA's English Access Microscholarship program reaches tens of thousands of students each year in under-served communities in more than 85 countries worldwide. They are building strong bridges between countries, communities, and cultures while strengthening America's popularity and appeal.

I also believe the following are essential strategic directions for ECA:

1. Ensuring ECA programs are aligned with foreign policy and are mutually reinforcing
2. Leveraging technology and new media to connect more people with America, such as virtual exchange opportunities;
3. Investing in long-term relationships with exchange alumni to increase the overall impact of ECA's programs; and

4. Increasing opportunities for Americans and impact on domestic communities

Public diplomacy relies on our country's greatest asset, the American people. When you meet Americans, you meet American values. If confirmed, my focus will be on creating lasting people-to-people relationships that are the foundation of U.S. global engagement. I would be honored to lead this important effort for our country.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to answering your questions.