

**Testimony of John R. Phillips  
Ambassador-Designate to the Italian Republic  
and the Republic of San Marino  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
July 30, 2013**

Mr. Chairman and Members of this distinguished Committee,

It is a great honor to appear before you today. I want to express my gratitude to President Obama and Secretary Kerry for the trust and confidence they have placed in me with this nomination to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to Italy and to the Republic of San Marino. I also want to acknowledge my wife of 40 years, Linda Douglass, who spent many years up here covering the Congress as the Chief Capitol Hill Correspondent for ABC News, my daughter, Dr. Katie Byrd, an emergency room doctor at George Washington University Hospital, and her husband Keith, a fire and explosives investigator. I am proud to have them with me here today and am grateful for their love and support.

The United States and Italy enjoy a robust and vibrant relationship – something that was on full display when Italian President Giorgio Napolitano visited President Obama in the White House this past February. Secretary of State Kerry made Rome a centerpiece of his first trip abroad as Secretary and has consulted closely with our Italian partners since that time.

But as strong as the ties are between our leaders, the bonds between our people are what make the relationship between the United States and Italy stand out. More Americans visit Italy every year than any other non-English speaking country. When it comes to studying abroad, Italy remains a top choice of American students. What's more, more than 20 million Americans trace their ancestry to Italy. Italian Americans have been some of the most outstanding contributors to the growth and success of this country in a wide variety of fields.

While it may not be apparent from my last name, Phillips, I am one of those 20 million Americans of Italian descent. My grandparents, Angelo Filippi and Lucy Colussy, left their villages in the Friuli region of northern Italy to come to America to seek a better life. They settled down in a small town near Pittsburgh, where others from small towns in Italy had come before. When my father's older brother went to school for the first time, the teacher showed him how to write Filippi in

American: Phillips. My brothers, cousins and I have always regretted losing that distinctive Italian identity.

My interest in Italy and in U.S.-Italian relations has grown over the years-- from an initial desire to connect with my roots, to personal engagement committed to bringing our two nations closer together. For several years now, I have had the honor of serving as a trustee of the American Academy in Rome, perhaps the preeminent institution in Europe promoting U.S.-Italian cultural exchange. I also learned a great deal about Italian local government and cultural preservation when I invested in an abandoned group of houses in Tuscany and worked to restore them, always mindful of, and faithful to, the region's proud cultural heritage.

I believe my professional career as a lawyer involved in public policy issues for over 40 years has prepared me well for this challenging new assignment. In 1970, I co-founded one of the first Ford Foundation-funded public interest law firms which, for two decades, successfully brought important cases on major public policy issues. In the mid-1980s, I worked closely with Senator Chuck Grassley and Congressman Howard Berman to strengthen the Federal False Claims Act, which is designed to root out and deter fraud against the taxpayers. Since 1986, when President Reagan signed the amendments we worked on into law, more than 55 billion dollars have been recovered by the U. S. government from companies that defrauded it. My firm, Phillips & Cohen, is responsible for recovering \$11 billion of those 55 billion dollars.

Since 2009, I have been privileged to serve as Chairman of The President's Commission on White House Fellowships, considered by many to be the nation's premiere fellowship program. Each year the Commission selects 12 to 15 outstanding candidates to be future leaders of America and to work for a year at the highest levels of government. While I have not previously served as a diplomat, I believe that, if confirmed, my experience in public policy and public service will serve me well in leading our mission and engaging Italy on a full range of issues.

That engagement is a crucial job. Italy is a leader and contributor to peacekeeping missions worldwide, and has committed to continuing its leadership role in western Afghanistan as part of the NATO mission in that country. Italy works hard with us to find resolutions to violence and unrest in many parts of the globe, including Syria and the Middle East. Italy is also an important partner for building regional stability in North Africa. We are grateful that Italy hosts approximately 15,000 U.S. military and civilian personnel at U.S. and NATO military bases on Italian soil.

In an increasingly globalized world, economic ties with Italy remain important for the health of the U.S. economy. The United States remains the largest source of foreign investment in Italy. If confirmed, I would promote U.S. exports to Italy and support the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) as a way to boost economic growth in the United States and the EU.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the relationship between the United States and San Marino. The United States cooperates closely with this small but proud nation on many important issues, including the fight against international terrorism and serious crime. We also maintain excellent collaboration in the UN and other international organizations.

Once again, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity. I am humbled and honored to receive this nomination to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to Italy and San Marino. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and the other members of Congress in advancing U.S. policy and interests in Italy.