

Statement of James “Wally” Brewster
Ambassador-Designate to the Dominican Republic

Senate Foreign Relations Committee

October 3, 2013

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. I am honored to be President Obama’s nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic. I would like to express my gratitude to President Obama for his confidence in nominating me and to Secretary Kerry for his trust as well.

Senator Durbin, it is an honor to have been introduced by you today. I am grateful for your leadership, friendship, and support. I would like to introduce my partner, Bob Satawake. Bob has lived with me and supported me for over 25 years in all my endeavors and is certainly a partner on this journey as well. I am grateful for his presence here today. My parents James and Patsy Brewster also join me in spirit. My father is too ill to join us today and my mother has left this earth but both are always with me as are the principles they instilled in me. They taught me to have a strong faith, never judge others, always be tolerant, and treat everyone with the same dignity and respect that I expect from others. They taught me to help those less fortunate, help others through this life, and always love not hate. If confirmed, I will take those principles with me to the Dominican Republic.

I have been fortunate to study commerce and human behavior during my past 30 years in the private sector. As an executive with SB&K Global, General Growth Properties, and The

Rouse Company, I have used these skills to assist in building new cities and developing world-renowned shopping and entertainment destinations across the United States and Brazil. I have created strong public/private partnerships and brought commerce to the United States through business partnerships around the globe. If confirmed, I will take these strategic skills to the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Chairman, the President offered me a unique opportunity when he nominated me to be Ambassador to the Dominican Republic. I have developed a sincere appreciation for the country over the past decade through my opportunities to visit and owning a home there for several years. I am thrilled that, if confirmed, I will be able to continue my efforts to build deeper, stronger bonds between the Dominican Republic and the United States as U.S. Ambassador.

The United States and the Dominican Republic share a relationship that incorporates business, trade, sports, and culture. However, I firmly believe the most valuable bonds are the family ties that link our two countries. There are well over a million people of Dominican descent in the United States and over a hundred thousand Americans who have made their home in the Dominican Republic. Then there are the over one million American tourists who visit every year, creating and enhancing ties with each visit.

One primary focus, if I am confirmed, will be citizen security, one of Dominican President Danilo Medina's highest priorities. There is already very strong U.S. cooperation with Dominican authorities to prevent crime, combat illicit trafficking, and improve respect for human rights. The cornerstone of this effort is the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, or CBSI, in

which the Dominican Republic is a valued partner. CBSI provides training and technical assistance to Dominican law enforcement and justice authorities on topics such as police reform and accountability, criminal prosecution, reduction of corruption, money laundering, and preventing and responding to gender-based violence. It also enhances port security, makes justice services more accessible, and supports the professionalization of the Dominican armed services. No one country alone can fight the rise in criminal activity in the Caribbean. If confirmed, I will encourage the Government of the Dominican Republic to continue its high-profile role in these and other initiatives to maximize regional security efforts. One cannot effectively tackle crime and improve the lives of citizens without addressing root causes and putting in place government controls to prevent corruption and increase transparency. The Dominican people realize this and have demonstrated close and highly effective cooperation with the United States to confront these problems.

The Dominican Republic is a young democracy that has made progress in promoting fundamental freedoms. However, if these are not accompanied by economic advancement and social inclusion, democracy itself will be undermined. If confirmed, I will use the tools at my disposal -- in close consultation with this Committee and Congress -- to advocate for policies that foster economic and social justice for the benefit of Dominican society. I want to support President Medina's efforts to eradicate illiteracy, strengthen public education, and improve public health in the Dominican Republic, to ensure that the poor and historically marginalized populations are not left behind as the Dominican Republic's economy grows.

I believe the Dominican Republic can use its regional leadership to encourage democratic development and greater respect for human rights throughout the hemisphere. If confirmed, I will encourage the Dominican Republic to expand engagement with partner countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to strengthen effective democratic institutions to protect and preserve human rights.

While there are rising levels of political and personal freedom in the Dominican Republic, work remains to ensure all its citizens can fully participate in society. If confirmed, I will work to increase attention to social inclusion and protection of historically marginalized groups. I will continue our efforts to support civil society, vulnerable populations, and the disenfranchised. Everyone deserves human dignity and respect. Including diverse sectors of the population in the decision-making process to solve shared problems and reduce barriers to discrimination is a strategic and effective way to strengthen all societies.

I will also focus on education. A strong education opens the doors to opportunity. Last year, the Dominican Republic announced it will spend four percent of the national budget on education. If confirmed, I will continue to build on innovative educational programs offered by the United States for people across Dominican society, including marginalized populations. These tools increase knowledge, level the playing field, and lead to more Dominican students studying in the United States, and then returning home to practice the skills they learn in the United States. Learning English is one key to unlock new opportunities, and I will continue to support quality English teaching in the Dominican Republic. I will do my utmost to promote the

President's 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative so greater numbers of U.S. and Dominican students can benefit from the experience of studying abroad.

Another priority, if confirmed, will be protection of the environment. As the President noted in a speech earlier this year, though America's carbon pollution fell last year, global carbon pollution rose to a record high; we must recognize that developing countries are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change. This is particularly true in the Caribbean. As we help the Dominican Republic develop a stronger and more resilient energy sector and transition to cleaner, cheaper sources of energy, I will do my utmost to facilitate connections with our innovative private sector and the Dominican Republic's energy sector.

Likewise, one of the major sources of knowledge and capital at my disposal, if confirmed, will be the Dominican diaspora in the United States. I have many wonderful Dominican friends whose contributions to my life and Dominican society cannot be understated. I look forward to engaging other elements of this vibrant community to get a sense of what their concerns are, show them the work our mission is doing in the Dominican Republic, and determine how we can work together to create even more powerful synergies and increase investment.

Mr. Chairman, Martin Luther King said: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." I have already begun to see the challenges and controversies I will face in this job, but the rewards of representing the American people, creating a more prosperous hemisphere, and strengthening democracy through our evolving relationship with the Dominican Republic

will be far greater than any challenge or controversy I will ever encounter.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. Should I be confirmed, I will be honored to work on our strong and valued relationship with the Dominican Republic.

Thank you. I look forward to answering your questions.