

**Testimony of George J. Tsunis**  
**Ambassador-Designate to the Kingdom of Norway**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**January 16, 2014**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Johnson, and esteemed Members of the Committee:

I am both honored and humbled to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway. I thank the President for his trust and confidence in me, and I am grateful to this committee for considering my nomination. I am also grateful for this opportunity to serve our country, and I would be remiss in not acknowledging a few of the many people who have made this journey possible. First my parents, who immigrated to this country of opportunity and meritocracy, seeking to build a better life for their family. My parents sacrificed a lot to give my two sisters and me the opportunities they never had. So it is with gratitude that I introduce my mother Eleni, who had the foresight and determination to ensure that my sisters and I received a sound education and a reservoir of love.

Today I would also like to remember my father James, who passed away 12 years ago. My dad was the embodiment of the American dream, starting out as a busboy at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City, eventually opening his own small coffee shop and then a landmark restaurant that is still open today, 42 years later. He embraced our country with open arms, teaching his children the importance of hard work, family, and the value of a good education. These are not lessons that I or my sisters, Anastasia and

Vicki, took lightly. My sisters took that lesson one step further and became public school teachers. Most importantly, I would like to thank my wife Olga, and our three children James, Eleni, and Yanna, who are my bedrock of support and living reminders of the legacy my parents started here in the United States.

After attending law school, I worked in government, as an associate in a small law firm, and then as a partner in a large firm, until I followed my father into the world of business and entrepreneurship when I founded Chartwell Hotels. During my tenure as CEO, Chartwell not only weathered the recession but experienced unprecedented growth. Having personally witnessed the strength and resiliency of U.S. business and its success in the international marketplace, I feel I understand the importance of expanding our global business and trade.

My company's success was not the result of one person's effort. Whether public or private, a successful organization is built through teamwork and a collaborative sense of mission. If I am confirmed, I will draw on this experience to make the best case for my country, cognizant that I will be working with a terrific American and Norwegian team at Embassy Oslo.

Throughout my career, I have maintained a strong interest in foreign and economic affairs, and I've had the pleasure of contributing to public policy as a member of the Brookings Institution's Foreign Policy Leadership Committee and as a trustee with the Business Executives for National

Security. If confirmed, I look forward to putting this experience to work for the American people.

We share strong bilateral ties with Norway, in large part because we share a commitment to promoting human rights, democracy, and freedom throughout the world. Norway is a pro-active, global peace-builder and for a country of just five million people, its influence and reputation in the international community far surpasses its size. The most notable of these efforts is the Oslo Accords, although Norway has mediated a number of prominent conflicts, including those in Sri Lanka and Colombia. Norway is a strong supporter of the current negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. This reflects Norway's strong desire to contribute to world peace, and its reputation as an honest arbitrator.

In addition to peace and reconciliation efforts, Norway is a generous contributor to international development and humanitarian relief efforts. Norway is a strong partner on environmental matters, and a leader in the area of global climate change. With our common strategic interest in the Arctic, Norway is a natural partner in these fields. If confirmed, I will work to preserve and expand this invaluable partnership with Norway.

A co-founder of NATO, Norway is a reliable Ally. American and Norwegian soldiers and civilians have stood together in Afghanistan to support its transformation to a safe, sovereign, and secure nation. During NATO operations in Libya in 2011, Norwegian F-16s were among the Alliance's most effective air assets. Norway will further deepen its

commitment to military readiness and interoperability with U.S. forces through its plans to purchase 52 Joint Strike Fighters from Lockheed Martin.

Norway is an important business partner of the United States. We are Norway's sixth largest trading partner and our trade relationship is free of major disputes. My focus, if I am confirmed, will be expanding economic development opportunities both for U.S. companies in Norway, and encouraging Norwegian firms' investments in the United States. The energy sector is at the heart of the U.S.-Norwegian economic relationship, and it is expected that U.S. energy companies will expand their interests in the Norwegian oil and gas sector, creating new export opportunities and jobs for American businesses.

With the Senate's confirmation, I will work to expand European support for the transatlantic relationship to deepen people-to-people ties between Norway and the United States. I will give my full support to public diplomacy efforts to reach out to people throughout Norway and to provide educational exchange opportunities for Norwegians to study in the United States, and expand these opportunities wherever possible. There is no better way to build understanding than to expose someone directly to life in America and direct engagement with the American people.

If confirmed, I will work side by side with my outstanding Embassy team to strengthen this already strong relationship between our two countries and maintain the Embassy's proud tradition, serving U.S. interests. As I mentioned at the start, at my core I am grateful for this opportunity to serve

my country – I have an obligation to give back – and I look forward to answering any questions you have.