

Statement of Michele Thoren Bond
Nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 9, 2015

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, and distinguished members of the Foreign Relations Committee,

It is the honor of a lifetime to be here today. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Kerry for the confidence and trust they placed in me by selecting me for this position.

I am proud to introduce three of our four children, Robert, Elisabeth and Lillian Bond. My family is the center of my life. I could not have been successful without their love and support. My family is also one of dedicated public servants, and that is why my husband and younger son cannot join us today.

My husband, Ambassador Clifford Bond, is a retired Foreign Service Officer currently working at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv, coordinating U.S. aid to Ukraine. Our son Matthew is a Peace Corps Volunteer, teaching English in Indonesia.

My mother was the earliest and most influential inspiration for my life, and my career. She worked for the Department of State, in post-war Stockholm, when she was only 21, and years later at NATO, and in Washington. She introduced me to public service. Through her, I met smart, dedicated Foreign Service Officers, and began to understand how diplomacy affects the lives of individuals and benefits our country.

I began working at the Department of State as a college student, during summer breaks. I served on my first crisis task force in 1974 – the Cyprus invasion. Our resources were rudimentary compared to what we have now, but the issues would be familiar to any of my colleagues today - desperate families called seeking information about loved ones in Cyprus and Greece. We scribbled details and contact information for each family on 3x5 cards. It is an extraordinary honor to lead a bureau that has the same dedication and focus today that I first experienced more than 40 years ago. Since then, I have had the privilege of serving in places as varied as The Netherlands, Guatemala, Russia, and Lesotho. The positions I held over the course of my tenure prepared me well to lead the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

BUREAU of CONSULAR AFFAIRS

My Bureau, CA, directly touches lives across the globe. We serve on the front lines of U.S. diplomacy, and our work is central to the advancement of U.S. foreign policy. We guard against foreign and domestic threats by assisting U.S. citizens overseas and safeguarding our borders at home. We are committed to protecting the integrity of our processes and decisions. We are there for our citizens during the best and worst days of their lives abroad – assisting with overseas adoptions, aiding those who have lost a loved one, or organizing an evacuation to get our citizens to safety. We open up the world to our citizens with one of the world’s most coveted travel documents – the U.S. passport. The impact of our work is felt across the nation. Our work affects the lives of everyone in this room and every one of your constituents.

Our most valuable asset, by far, is our staff. The members of the consular team are incredible public servants. I have seen how the Bureau has met the challenges of 21st century diplomacy, adapted technology to improve the speed, scope and quality of our service, learned from experience and embraced innovation. Investment in CA’s human capital is vital to engage, develop, and retain these talented professionals. If confirmed, I will build on the hard-won achievements of my predecessors by sustaining a well-trained, motivated, dynamic, and efficient workforce.

I pledge that the Bureau of Consular Affairs will continue to protect our citizens abroad and provide all available assistance for any U.S. citizen in need overseas. We will continue to vigilantly protect our nation from those who wish to harm our citizens. We will further our efforts to make international adoption a real option for children who need permanent families, knowing they will be welcomed into American hearts and homes. Today I will discuss a few of the many achievements of our great team and how we develop leaders and innovators in foreign policy by furthering the vibrant culture of the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

Overseas Citizens Services – CA’s #1 Priority

The safety and protection of U.S. citizens overseas is among the U.S. government’s highest priorities, and CA’s number one priority. CA has assisted U.S. citizens affected by a number of recent crises, including earthquakes in Nepal, political strife in Burundi, and the influx of those fleeing Yemen to Djibouti and other countries. In FY 2014, CA evacuated U.S. citizens from areas affected by hurricanes, typhoons, and Ebola; continued our engagement on detainee and hostage cases; visited 8,600 prisoners; performed 30,000 welfare and whereabouts checks; documented 66,000 U.S. citizen children born abroad; and consoled 10,200 bereaved families. We assisted thousands of U.S. citizens affected by abuse, mental illness, and crime abroad.

We promote intercountry adoption as a viable option throughout the world. We work to prevent international parental child abduction and to seek the return of abducted children.

Over a third of U.S. citizens hold a U.S. passport. Increasingly, they travel to destinations off the beaten path and engage in more adventurous activities. Our job to protect their safety and welfare remains the same, but is now more challenging. We proactively reach out to citizens to deliver the information they need to travel safely and responsibly. Our Consular Information Program, including Travel Alerts, Travel Warnings, and the Worldwide Caution, is the Department’s primary tool for providing U.S. citizens with timely, accurate information about potential threats to their safety abroad.

We continuously harness new technologies to keep information flowing during rapidly changing circumstances or crises overseas. We are on duty 24/7 to respond immediately as crises arise. Our Office of Policy Coordination and Public Affairs works with colleagues overseas to send messages out through social media outlets including Facebook and Twitter. Constant engagement with the public through these venues allows us to get the message out quickly in times of crisis. Our goal is to provide our citizens with the information and resources they need to make their own appropriate decisions in real time.

CA understands the gravity of our responsibility to U.S. citizens traveling overseas, and we consult closely with interagency partners and Congress on policies and issues affecting our citizens’ safety abroad. We have steadily increased our ability to inform and assist families during intercountry adoptions, for example.

U.S. Citizen Hostages Policy: CA played a key role in the interagency group tasked with a Presidentially-directed, government-wide review of the management of overseas hostage cases. Based on the hostage policy review, the President has established a Washington-based, FBI-led interagency Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC), a National Security Council-convened Hostage Response Group (HRG) providing policy guidance to the HRFC, and a Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs at the State Department who will lead diplomatic engagement on U.S. hostage policy and coordinate all diplomatic engagements in support of hostage recovery efforts. CA has assigned a consular officer fulltime to the HRFC as well as staff to support the Special Envoy's Office and to support hostage victims' families.

U.S. Detainees Abroad: In the Bureau of Consular Affairs, we continually monitor the cases of citizens detained abroad and work to obtain the release of those wrongfully held overseas. U.S. citizen detainee cases can be highly-visible, resource-intensive, and difficult to resolve, especially in countries without U.S. embassies.

Three U.S.-Iranian citizens – Saeed Abedini, Amir Hekmati, and Jason Rezaian – are currently imprisoned in Iran. Abedini and Hekmati have been charged, tried, and sentenced; Rezaian has been charged but not tried. President Obama, Secretary Kerry, and Under Secretary Sherman have raised these cases with their Iranian counterparts. Department officials also regularly raise the case of Robert Levinson, a former FBI agent who has been missing in Iran since March 2007.

International Parental Child Abduction (IPCA): CA is the U.S. Central Authority for the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Parental Child Abduction. We work closely with 73 Hague partner countries, and with authorities in non-Hague countries, to prevent situations where one parent wrongfully removes or retains a child away from his or her habitual residence, and to help left-behind parents seek return of, or access to, children who have been wrongfully removed or retained. CA recently released its first annual report under the Sean and David Goldman International Parental Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2014. In 2014, 781 abduction and access cases were resolved. CA continues to encourage non-Convention partner countries to become party to the Convention. After years of diplomatic effort, CA and colleagues across the Department celebrated Japan's accession in April 2014.

Universal Accreditation Act (UAA): We are delighted Congress passed the UAA. CA has engaged adoption service providers, advocacy groups, and national adoption organizations to inform them of the changes UAA introduced, to train on practical aspects of implementation, and to address issues and concerns as they arose before and after the UAA entered into force last July. Before the UAA, the standards of ethical conduct embodied in The Hague Adoption Convention applied in fewer than half of all intercountry adoption cases. Now, all U.S. citizens adopting abroad benefit from uniform standards governing the conduct of all U.S. adoption service providers. UAA also provides for universal monitoring and oversight of service provider adherence to those standards. The UAA closed a critical gap in protection for U.S. adoptive families.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Adoptions: The Department is seeking to unite nearly 600 Congolese children adopted, or in the process of being adopted, by U.S. citizens with their new families. The Congolese government abruptly suspended issuance of exit permits almost two years ago. Without exit permits, these children cannot join their families in the United States. We are addressing this issue on multiple levels. In addition to constant engagement by Embassy Kinshasa and Ambassador Swan, the Department's Special Advisor for Children's Issues, Ambassador Susan Jacobs, led a delegation to the DRC in December and pressed the Congolese government on these issues. I visited Kinshasa in March, where I met government and Parliamentary representatives, and some of the American parents who are living in Kinshasa with their children. I continue to follow this issue closely.

Secretary Kerry urged President Kabila to lift the suspension in May, August, and October 2014. Last August, President Kabila and Secretary Kerry agreed to establish a joint commission to discuss options to allow children with finalized adoptions to depart and to consult on adoption reforms. Some progress has been made; ten children with life-threatening medical conditions have received exit permits and several other cases are waiting to be reviewed by DRC officials. We are working with the other countries affected by this suspension, including Canada, Italy, Belgium, France, and The Netherlands, to press the DRC to resolve this protracted situation. We have met numerous times with Congressional staff to keep them informed about this situation. If confirmed, I commit to you that I will continue to push for urgent resolution of these cases. These children belong with the loving families who have adopted them. We will continue to keep lines of communication open.

Passports – Safeguarding the Most Coveted Travel Document

The Bureau of Consular Affairs opens the world to millions of U.S. citizens. Our passport agencies unlock the gate to global experiences and mutual understanding for U.S. citizen travelers. By accurately and efficiently adjudicating U.S. passport applications, U.S. passport agencies and fraud prevention teams reliably provide U.S. citizens with the world's most coveted travel document, and keep that document out of the hands of criminals. We know Congress shares our goal of continually improving the integrity of the passport issuance process, and in this regard, we trust Congress and staffers will do everything possible to ensure that we have access to all needed databases, including the full Social Security Administration death file, access to State driver's license information, and both Federal and State level incarceration information.

CA operates 27 domestic passport agencies, two document print centers, and two passport information and call centers across the United States. We have established 12 new passport agencies since 2008 to handle rapidly increasing demand. We adjudicated 14.1 million passport applications in FY 2014, delivering more than 99 percent of those products within their targeted timeframes. There are currently nearly one million applications in the system – the highest volume since 2009. In the last two fiscal years, passports generated nearly \$3 billion in revenue. There are approximately 123 million valid passports in circulation.

Foreign Terrorist Fighters: CA initiated policies and streamlined procedures to deny or revoke passports of U.S. citizens engaged in activities as Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) who pose significant threats to U.S. national security and foreign policy. CA works diligently with our federal partners to ensure that appropriate passport denial or revocation helps to keep the United States safe. We work closely with the FBI's Counterterrorism Division and other government departments and agencies to ensure broad familiarity with the availability and use of passport denial and revocation to prevent travel. We engaged with the Terrorism Screening Center and partnered with Diplomatic Security (DS) to provide assistance to the National Joint Terrorism Task Force.

To address the potential threat posed by other FTFs using the identities or passports of "unreported deceased" individuals, we implemented procedures to cancel the U.S. passports of deceased FTFs and of hostages killed by terrorists. Cancelled passport information is available to all overseas posts and

passport agencies, and is provided in real time to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Interpol. We continue to work with the intelligence community and the National Counter Terrorism Center on potential passport revocation of suspected U.S. citizens serving as FTFs, and will facilitate revocation appropriately where sufficient evidence exists and the action is appropriate.

Our domestic passport agencies and overseas posts remain on alert for terrorism related information in conducting adjudications and work with DS to share relevant information with our federal partners.

Passport Surge: The projected demand for passport applications for FY 2015 was recently revised to 14.5 million. We expect an unprecedented passport renewal surge in the coming years. To prepare for this, we are modernizing our information systems, including planning for online passport renewals, automated refunds, and additional payment options, to improve customers' overall experience and manage our workload more efficiently.

Next Generation Passport: CA will begin system-wide deployment of the Next Generation Passport in FY 2016. This upgraded document features security enhancements designed to prevent counterfeiting and fraudulent use of lost or stolen passports. The most prominent enhancement is a laser-engraved polycarbonate data page.

Visas – Uniting Families, Growing the Economy, Securing our Nation

Secretary Kerry believes that foreign policy is economic policy and this is particularly true when it comes to visa policy. The Bureau of Consular Affairs directly affects businesses across the country by facilitating international tourism and helping local entrepreneurs recruit the world's innovators to help them develop the next generation of technology. Demand for visas to visit the U.S. has skyrocketed world-wide.

Others have recognized our achievements as well: the United States Travel Association awarded the Bureau's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Visa Services the "Distinguished Partner Award" in March 2015, writing that he "helped create an environment that welcomes international visitors to the United States, who bring with them spending dollars and goodwill that have helped advance the U.S. economy and American public diplomacy." In 2014, a record 75 million international visitors traveled to the United States, a seven percent increase over

2013; they spent over \$220 billion. Tourism is America's largest services export and one that can't be outsourced.

Our investments to increase visa processing capacity and decrease visa interview wait times worldwide create jobs across the United States. International travelers support 1.1 million U.S. jobs. In a January 2012 executive order, President Obama directed State to increase visa-processing capacity in China and Brazil by 40 percent in 2012 and to ensure 80 percent of applicants worldwide wait less than three weeks for their visa interviews. We exceeded both goals. CA reached the global target for wait times in August 2012, and wait times in key markets such as Brazil, China, India, and Mexico have rarely exceeded single digits since 2012. More than 95 percent of visa applicants requiring an interview receive an appointment in less than three weeks.

The United States will continue to attract tourists, businesses, students, and talent from around the world – in fact, President Obama's goal is to welcome 100 million international visitors annually by 2021. The vast majority of visitors travel to the United States with no malicious intent. However, some visa applicants are criminals or terrorists. Every visa decision we make, thousands of times a day, is a national security decision. Each of our consular officers understands this. CA is diligently working with DHS to expand visa reciprocity, the Visa Waiver Program, and the Interview Waiver Program, as appropriate, because these efforts allow us to focus our resources where the risks are highest.

Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Programs: We could not do our jobs overseas without the dedication and expertise of our locally engaged staff. Working for the U.S. Government sometimes comes at a personal cost to our staff and their families. In Iraq and Afghanistan, this work has placed some local colleagues in grave danger. CA works with the interagency to adjudicate and efficiently issue Special Immigrant Visas to colleagues in Iraq and Afghanistan who worked alongside our soldiers and diplomats.

As of December 14, 2014, we had issued all 4,000 Afghan principal applicant SIVs authorized for use by the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY 2014 (3,000 SIV numbers, available through September 30, 2015) and the Emergency Afghan Allies Extension Act of 2014 (1,000 SIV numbers, available through December 31, 2014). The FY 2015 National Defense Authorization Act authorized 4,000 additional Afghan SIVs for use by March 31, 2017. To date, we have issued more than 800 of these SIVs. As of June 26, more than 13,000 Afghans are at some point in the SIV application review process. The Iraqi program has enough visa

numbers available to respond to demand. Although we issued record numbers of SIVs in FY 2014, there remain some long-pending cases undergoing security vetting. We are working with the interagency to speed processing and resolve cases while steadfastly maintaining the security of our immigration system and of the United States.

Visa Waiver Program and Interview Waiver Pilot Program: The Visa Waiver Program is essential to achieve the Administration's policy and security goals, and maximize efficiency for our customers. We work with DHS to expand the Visa Waiver Program as appropriate, with Chile joining in 2014. With DHS concurrence, we indefinitely extended the Interview Waiver Program, which allows us to waive interviews for applicants in certain low-risk populations – over one million applicants in 2014 – allowing us to focus on higher-risk applicants. We continue to work with our partners to determine the feasibility of expanding the Visa Waiver Program, the Interview Waiver Program, and reciprocal visa validities in support of the President's goal to attract 100 million visitors to the United States annually by 2021.

Foreign Fighters and the Visa Waiver Program (VWP): The protection of U.S. borders is of the utmost importance to CA. We collaborate closely with DHS to support its mission of protecting the United States by promoting effective aviation and border security screening with our foreign partners through enhanced information sharing. To travel without a visa under the VWP, an applicant must obtain authorization through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) prior to boarding a U.S.-bound air or sea carrier. Should standard ESTA screening indicate that a traveler might be ineligible, that individual's ESTA application is denied, and the traveler is directed to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate to apply for a visa. In November 2014, ESTA enhancements went into effect that allow the U.S. government to more effectively identify travelers who might pose a risk to the United States, including foreign fighters.

Ten Year Validity for Chinese Visas: The Bureau of Consular Affairs was instrumental in negotiating and shepherding the expansion of Chinese visa validity, which President Obama announced in November 2014. Visa demand in Mission China has risen by more than 53 percent in the wake of the announcement and the Chinese are issuing visas with the same reciprocal validity to U.S. citizens. This has a significant impact on travel and tourism in both countries and helps boost people-to-people engagement. It will be a tremendous boon to U.S. businesses and have a significant effect on our economy. From January to May 2015, CA issued 1.5 million visas to Chinese travelers.

Modernized Immigrant Visa: As a global service organization, CA must constantly ensure that our processes meet the needs of our customers. We are working with DHS, private and non-federal public actors, and technology experts to implement a streamlined, electronic immigrant visa process that will save time and money.

Fraud Prevention – Facilitate Travel, Maximize Security Measures

Fraud prevention and detection are a critical part of our operations. As the demand for our services increases, so do efforts by criminal elements, or those who think they can catch us off guard. We must remain vigilant in our work while still maintaining efficiency. New tools and technologies help identify and malafide applicants. One of CA's priorities for 2015 is to develop programs and techniques to pre-screen applicants prior to their interviews. Our global fraud tracking database allows us to more efficiently document and analyze fraud research. Our fraud prevention and detection efforts are successful in part because of increased collaboration across the U.S. government, and access to better information and technology.

CA Systems – Keeping Up with Demand in a Changing World

Stable technological systems are a top priority for CA. This is key to improving customers' overall experience and managing our workload efficiently.

Systems Modernization: The growing demand for our services puts unrelenting strain on our aging systems. A systems outage in June disrupted service and caused considerable hardship for some customers across the globe.

A June 9 hardware failure halted the flow of biometric data for visa application security checks to posts overseas, preventing posts from issuing visas and processing new visa applications. The effort to switch to the stand-by system failed due to corrupted data. CA collaborated with private sector experts and the White House's U.S. Digital Services team and worked around the clock to restore service by taking a database with six month old data and merging the data from the failed production system into the new one. CA then reconnected posts to the central biometrics database in a staggered worldwide roll-out, beginning with our largest nonimmigrant visa and immigrant visa processing posts. All visa-issuing posts were reconnected by June 26.

Taking into account the legal requirements to conduct security screening for visa applicants, CA explored every available option to facilitate legitimate travel during the outage. We secured strong cooperation with DHS/CBP on port of entry (POE) document waiver requests for cases with humanitarian or high-level U.S. national interest and for more than 250 critically-needed temporary agricultural workers. We issued more than 3,500 visas for urgent and humanitarian travel in cases that did not require fingerprints, including visas for adopted children, diplomats on official travel, and some temporary workers. After the systems were restored, consular sections overseas worked extended hours and through the weekend to rapidly return to normal processing times.

CA is committed to modernizing consular systems to prevent future recurrences of these problems. We are migrating our databases to a significantly more robust combined hardware and software Oracle Exadata platform. We recently installed new servers in Beijing, Guangzhou, and Shanghai that can handle up to four times the workload. We will install the same servers in our busiest missions over the course of the year.

ConsularOne: We are in the development phase of ConsularOne, a major IT initiative to consolidate all consular applications into one integrated system. This will reduce inefficiencies and data duplication, improve our ability to track demand, and help us to better detect trends and anomalies across all consular services. ConsularOne is a key component of online passport renewal, which we plan to introduce next year.

CA Budget and Resources – Responsibly Use Public Resources without Burdening Taxpayers

If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring we are fiscally responsible and shrewd stewards of our funds. CA is funded by consular user fees, not by taxpayers. In FY 2014, CA generated \$3.6 billion in revenue, which supports all consular operations in the Department and provides border security-related funding to some interagency partners.

CA Funds: CA is fully fee funded, and collects and retains fees for certain visa and passport services pursuant to specific statutory authority. We do not collect fees for every service we perform. Under current fee statutes, we are allowed to retain approximately 80 percent of the fees we collect, with the balance going to the Treasury. Currently, CA has 12 Partner Bureaus with programs or positions

directly supported through retained consular fees. If confirmed, I would ask your consideration in enhancing our ability to retain and spend the funds generated through consular fees. With added flexibilities, we can improve and expand our work to secure the safety and security of U.S. citizens abroad.

Cost of Service Model: CA's cost of service model uses activity-based costing methodologies to calculate the true cost of consular services, to recommend appropriate fees for services, and to inform CA's funding strategies so CA appropriately administers the Department's Consular and Border Security Programs (CBSP). Fee flexibilities included in the FY 2016 President's Budget Request will ensure future efficient and responsible disbursement of CBSP funds that is in line with how fees are set. We will also create, implement, and institutionalize an authoritative CBSP plan and overarching governance process to guide budget planning, execution, and monitoring.

Consular Leadership – Developing the Workforce of the 21st Century

CA is a global operation with a significant footprint. We have a workforce of over 13,000 highly trained professionals including Civil Service employees, Foreign Service officers, and Locally Employed staff, in more than 300 domestic and overseas offices.

Our colossal and growing workload can only be managed by a first rate workforce that leverages cutting-edge technological and management tools. I have every confidence in my team and in CA's senior leaders. I am committed to fostering the culture of leadership, management, and innovation excellence that is a hallmark of the Bureau.

We run our operations as effectively and efficiently as possible. I'd like to say that the Bureau of Consular Affairs is a well-oiled machine, but we are not machines. We are a compassionate, disciplined, and highly trained corps of individuals dedicated to the dual mission of protecting U.S. citizens overseas and protecting our nation's borders.

To build a team of consummate, compassionate professionals and prepare the next generation of FSOs, we developed 1CA: one Consular Affairs team. 1CA is the Bureau's office of leadership, management, and innovation, a proactive effort to promote excellence in an environment of budgetary restraint and increasing demand for our services. 1CA created a management framework based on private industry leading practices but customized for consular professionals. 1CA has

introduced a practical set of tools and resources that promote collaboration and help consular teams identify, prioritize, and resolve management and leadership challenges. Through these tools, our consular sections across the globe have increased adjudication numbers and reduced processing times and customer wait times.

It is my hope that CA will continue to foster a culture of leadership, sound management, and performance principles which exerts a broader influence across the Department. CA is proud to be the training ground for the next generation of Foreign Service Officers. All entry-level officers serve in Consular Affairs on their first or second tours. The capabilities and skills of our diplomats are greatly enhanced by the tools they learn during their consular tours.

ICA has become a model for how the Department approaches the development of human capital. Recently, State rolled out the Department's Leadership and Management Principles, tracking closely to CA's tenets. Our success has inspired the creation of Teamwork@State, the Department-wide initiative that provides toolkits and resources on teamwork across bureaus, posts, and offices.

If confirmed, I will do my utmost to continue to equip my team with the tools and resources necessary to fulfill their duties. I will also continue to work with the Department to prepare our new diplomats for future global challenges.

Relationship with Congress

The work of Consular Affairs often touches our citizens on a deeply personal level. I am committed to ensuring your constituents receive the assistance they require from CA in a timely manner and that information is presented clearly and transparently. If confirmed, I am committed to strengthening the relationship between Congress and the Bureau of Consular Affairs. In FY 2014, CA conducted more than 150 legislative briefings, testified at three hearings, and co-hosted the annual Immigration and Consular Conference for all Congressional staff. We conducted domestic agency and border post tours for constituent services staffers. We want Congress to be well informed of our issues and wish to be available to you for any inquiries you may have. Two consular liaison officers have offices on the Hill to respond to congressional inquiries, connect you with our subject matter experts, and engage on consular matters via webinars, conferences, and briefings. We have a dedicated website for congressional staff – travel.state.gov/congress – and dedicated congressional contacts at every overseas post, domestic passport agency, the National Visa Center, and the Kentucky

Consular Center. During overseas crises, we establish a dedicated Congressional email address for inquiries concerning constituents in the affected area.

Whole of Government Approach

If confirmed, I hope to amplify the cooperation among agencies, and with Congress, to use our resources as efficiently as possible, bringing a whole-of-government approach to serving the needs of our citizens. I will continue the close collaboration we enjoy with other bureaus across the Department and other government agencies to fulfill our mission of protecting U.S. citizens abroad and facilitating legitimate travel to the United States.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, if confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to ensure consular support for America's foreign policy objectives. If confirmed, I will continue to keep you informed of our resource needs, and work with you to ensure that the Bureau of Consular Affairs continues to meet its obligations to our citizens and to our nation.

Thank you.