

**Statement by Carmen G. Cantor**  
**Nominee for U.S. Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**October 16, 2019**

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee. I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be the next United States Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia, the FSM. I am grateful for the confidence that President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo have placed in me with this nomination.

If confirmed, I pledge to do my utmost to uphold this trust and to advance our nation's interests in the FSM and in the vital Indo-Pacific region.

Over the past twenty-nine years, I have been privileged to serve our nation in different roles and agencies: the U.S. Postal Service, the Federal Maritime Commission, the Foreign Agricultural Service, and the U.S. Department of State. Any measure of success that I achieved during these appointments would not have been possible without the support of my family, so I would like to start by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to them.

I come from a very large Puerto Rican family. My father, Anibal Castro Justiniano, an Army National Guard veteran, was one of 18 siblings. My mother, Zoraida Laracuenta Ramirez, was one of 9 siblings. I have one sister and many uncles, aunts and cousins. I won't name them all, but I do want to recognize my husband, Carlos, a public servant for the last 35 years, who is with me today. Carlos spent most of his career in the U.S. Postal Service and now works in the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

Our daughters are here with us as well. Ashley is a public servant working at NASA, Amanda is a college senior at the University of Maryland, and Adriana is a freshman at Annapolis High School.

As the Federated States of Micronesia President David Panuelo highlighted in his inauguration speech, the United States is the FSM's most important partner. And, from our perspective, the FSM is an important longtime partner and, as Secretary Pompeo said during his recent visit, a

stronghold of freedom in the Indo-Pacific. We share a distinctive partnership based on mutual values enshrined in the Compact of Free Association (Compact), as amended.

The FSM's geo-political importance is clear:

- The FSM shares our vision for an open and free Indo-Pacific that respects sovereignty, the rule of law, and transparency.
- The FSM supports international efforts to advance the denuclearization of North Korea, in particular by ensuring the full implementation of UN sanctions.
- The FSM votes with the United States at the United Nations at rates higher than most countries, especially to combat anti-Israel bias.

With that solid foundation in place, the reality is that we are at a historic moment in our unique and special partnership. We have an opportunity to act as a positive alternative to China's growing presence in the FSM and the region. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the United States continues to support the FSM's peace prosperity, democracy, and freedoms. I will continue to foster an interagency environment of collaboration with agencies including Department of the Interior, U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Health and Human Services, and Department of Agriculture.

Pursuant to the amended Compact, the U.S. Government provides economic assistance and access to U.S. federal programs and services, including the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, U.S. Postal Service, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to name a few. The United States is also responsible for security and defense matters in and relating to the FSM and has special and extensive access to operate in the FSM's territory, as well as the authority to deny access to the FSM by other countries' militaries and their personnel. In August, Secretary Pompeo became the first Secretary of State to visit the FSM where he announced the United States' intent to begin negotiations on agreements to amend certain provisions of the Compacts with the FSM, the Marshall Islands, and Palau. If confirmed, I will continue working on solidifying our bonds with the FSM by facilitating efficient negotiations to advance our mutually beneficial partnership.

FSM's sons and daughters, citizens representing all four states, serve in the United States military at per capita rates higher than most U.S. States. Ten citizens of the FSM have paid the ultimate price and died in combat while serving in the U.S. armed forces. Many FSM citizens join our military and put their lives at risk on behalf of freedom and democracy around the world. If confirmed, I will work with our Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense to improve the assistance veterans in the FSM receive.

The FSM is highly vulnerable to natural disasters. I am not a stranger to the issues and challenges surrounding natural disasters in an island environment. Living in Puerto Rico, I remember very vividly Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and saw from afar the damage caused by Hurricane George in 1998 and Hurricane Maria in 2017. I've seen landslides, flooded roads, devastation, and destruction. I'm aware of the loss caused by Typhoon Wutip in the FSM this past winter. If confirmed, I will work with the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia to strengthen the FSM's resilience to disasters through disaster preparedness and I will make the safety of our embassy staff a top priority.

In closing, I can't envision a greater honor other than to lead the U.S. Mission to the Federated States of Micronesia, working with our friends in the FSM and representing our nation during this vital time.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and the honorable Members of this Committee to advance U.S. interests in the FSM and to sustain and expand the progress we have achieved in our unique, long-term, and positive relationship with this extremely important partner.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.