

Statement of Sharon Day
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica
Submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 19, 2017

Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Menendez, and Members of the Committee,

It is my honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to represent the United States as Ambassador to the Republic of Costa Rica. I am humbled by the President's trust and I am also very mindful of the responsibilities that are being asked of me – to both share our country's principles of freedom and democracy, and protect our Costa Rica Mission family and all Americans in country. I want to emphasize that, if confirmed as U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica; my duty would be, first and foremost, to the American people.

I want to thank my loved ones and my family – my mother, Mary Swartz, my son, Coby, his wife Stephanie, my beautiful grand babies Aidan, Tristan, and Maci, my sisters and brothers, and my stepson Aaron Day and his family. I also want to thank my friends who have helped guide me on my journeys and successes. And to my late husband, Larry, thank you for always encouraging and believing that all things were possible for me. Our loved ones pay the biggest price for our passion of serving, and I will always be thankful for their love and support.

I sit before you today mindful and appreciative of the journey my life has taken. I am thankful for the opportunities and the understanding that in our country anything is possible. I grew up in San Antonio, Texas in a middle class family – my dad was an electrician and my mom was a stay at home Mom. We weren't rich with money, but I was rich by the principles that I was taught – that hard work matters – that honesty matters – that lying about a misdeed was worse than the deed itself – to have respect for every individual, in fact, even today I say “sir” or “ma'am” to everyone I meet in person or that I may come in contact with – it was instilled in me that you can do anything you put your mind to – and no dream was too big if you had an education. My home was also where I learned you can have very divergent beliefs – very different political philosophies – and you can also sometimes have loud discussions while still being united in ways that really matter and count because you see, as I mentioned...my dad was a union electrician and also a Democrat while my mom was a Republican.

I thank you for the opportunity to share the principles that have been instilled in my life. I could have never imagined or dreamed that I would be sitting before you today as the nominee for United States Ambassador to the Republic of Costa Rica.

I have travelled to Costa Rica and witnessed firsthand its world-renowned natural beauty and biodiversity, its rich cultural and historical attractions, and the kindness of its people. The United States and Costa Rica share a long and close relationship that centers on our commitment to democratic principles, strong commercial ties, and the relationships between our people. The strong bi-lateral relationship between our two countries is strengthened by our longstanding and meaningful people-to-people ties which is something I have witnessed firsthand in my home state of Florida. Costa Rica is a key tourist destination for my fellow Americans with over a million visitors annually and the number one destination for U.S. students studying abroad in

Latin America. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to build on our long history of bilateral cooperation, as well as cooperation on regional and global issues.

The Administration is engaging with Costa Rica at the highest levels. In March, Vice President Mike Pence welcomed President Luis Guillermo Solis to the White House. In June, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson met with his counterpart, Foreign Minister Manuel Gonzalez Sanz, at the Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America in Miami.

This early engagement is emblematic of the close and cooperative relationship the U.S. Embassy in San Jose has established with President Solis and his administration. If confirmed, I would promote U.S. policy in three priority areas:

- (1) Working with Costa Rica to ensure U.S. citizen visitors and residents are safe;
- (2) Improving the capacity of the Costa Rican government to disrupt the northward flow of illicit drugs and illegal migrants through Costa Rica to the United States; and
- (3) Supporting Costa Rica's efforts to strengthen its economy and improve its business climate, which will provide greater opportunities for U.S. companies.

If confirmed, I will work with our Costa Rican partners to help the country disrupt trafficking and smuggling operations of people and goods in order to ensure that organized crime does not destabilize the country's democratic institutions. Costa Rica has already proven to be an excellent, willing partner with the United States in these efforts. A safe and secure Costa Rica is beneficial for both the U.S. citizens who visit this beautiful country, and for those who call Costa Rica home.

Additionally, if confirmed, I would focus on expanding and deepening the economic ties between our nations. Improving the Costa Rican business climate would give U.S. businesses greater export and investment opportunities.

We talk of the American dream...today I am the embodiment of the American dream. The principles and values that my parents instilled in me are the ideals that make America great and it is these beliefs that will serve me well in the important role for which I am asking your consideration and support – the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Costa Rica.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to your questions.