

Testimony of Sheila Gwaltney
Nominee for Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 23, 2015

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee

It is a great honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic. I am deeply grateful for the trust and confidence the President and Secretary Kerry have shown in me with this nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the Members of this Committee and their staff to promote and protect U.S. interests in the Kyrgyz Republic.

I have had the privilege of serving our country for 31 years as a Foreign Service Officer. I have served as Deputy Chief of Mission in the Kyrgyz Republic, Ukraine and Russia and have worked on issues related to this region for most of my career. I can think of no higher honor than to return to represent the American people as Ambassador of the United States to the Kyrgyz Republic, a country I know and respect for its rich culture, natural beauty, and warm and hospitable people. I deeply appreciate the love and support of my family and friends throughout these years.

The principles that have guided U.S. policy toward the Kyrgyz Republic remain as relevant today as they were when that country attained independence 23 years ago. Our long-term focus has always been to support and respect its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence. Our strategic goals are to facilitate and strengthen the Kyrgyz Republic's stability, prosperity, and democracy.

The Kyrgyz Republic is Central Asia's leader in democratic development. In 2011, following the election of President Atambayev, the Kyrgyz Republic accomplished the first democratic transfer of presidential power in Central Asia. The Kyrgyz Republic has an independent parliament and a vibrant and active civil society, with thousands of non-governmental organizations working in a wide variety of fields. If confirmed, I would work with the government and people of the Kyrgyz Republic to strengthen the country's democratic institutions, support the continued growth of civil society, and promote respect for human rights.

Our security cooperation with the Kyrgyz Republic is focused on the common goals of countering terrorism, improving border security, and stemming the flow of

illegal narcotics. The United States and the Kyrgyz Republic need to work together to fight human trafficking and other transnational threats. If confirmed, I would work to strengthen our existing partnership and continue our joint efforts to address regional and global security challenges.

Expanding markets and opportunities for American business is a top priority worldwide. As Secretary Kerry says, "Foreign policy is economic policy." If confirmed, I would work with the Kyrgyz Republic to bolster private-sector-driven economic growth, including through the promotion of American economic and business interests. The Kyrgyz Republic has been a regional leader in pursuing market reforms and our two nations can work together to expand prosperity for both our countries.

People-to-people contacts remain the bedrock of our diplomatic efforts. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging people throughout the Kyrgyz Republic and strengthening ties between the American and Kyrgyz people. Public diplomacy efforts promote a positive understanding of the United States and help build deep and lasting ties between our countries.

If confirmed, it would be my honor to ensure that our Mission continues to provide U.S. citizens residing in or visiting the Kyrgyz Republic the highest quality services and utmost protection in times of need.

Mr. Chairman, one of the great privileges of my career has been the opportunity to help lead teams of Americans serving at our Embassies overseas that are dedicated to the advancement of U.S. interests. If confirmed, I would do my best to ensure the safety, security, and well-being of my colleagues and their family members who serve at our Embassy. I would maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct and moral values for our Mission, including ensuring that the principles of non-discrimination and respect for diversity are respected by all in our mission.

If confirmed, I would always be available to this committee, its members and staff, to discuss and work together in pursuit of U.S. national interests in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you and the other members of the sub-committee and look forward to your questions.