

Statement of Lee McClenny
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Paraguay
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
November 30, 2017

Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Menendez,

It is an honor to be selected by Secretary Tillerson and nominated by President Trump to be Ambassador to the Republic of Paraguay. I am deeply pleased to enjoy the invaluable support of my wife, Katherine, as well as that of my family, friends, and colleagues. Many of them expressed a desire to be present to witness this important Constitutional process, but the pressures of time, distance and commitments to work mean only a few have been able to be present today.

Mr. Chairman, I have been privileged to serve our nation for some 30 years as a career Foreign Service Officer, working to achieve our foreign policy goals and national security objectives. My nine overseas postings have been predominantly in the Western Hemisphere, including my current assignment leading the staff of our embassy in Caracas, Venezuela.

Paraguay is one of our most like-minded partners in the hemisphere. It is clear that the Paraguayan people take the view, as we do ourselves, that sustained prosperity and long-term stability and security are inextricably linked to democratic governance and transparent and efficient institutions. If confirmed for this position, Mr. Chairman, I pledge to continue our ongoing efforts to strengthen our mutually advantageous ties with Paraguay. We will continue to assist Paraguay with its efforts to build durable and independent institutions, grow a strong and resilient economy, improve government transparency, and weed out corruption. These elements will strengthen Paraguay as a partner and build support for critical U.S. priorities. These include fighting money laundering and financial crime while strengthening intellectual property rights protections. We will support Paraguay's pursuit of transnational criminal organizations that abuse Paraguay's territory to commit a range of crimes, including contributing to the financing of known terrorist groups and trafficking in narcotics, weapons, counterfeit goods, and people.

Paraguay has a steadily expanding open-market economy and progressive trade policies that make it increasingly attractive to U.S. and other international firms. Paraguay actively seeks involvement from U.S. companies in the country's growing role as a manufacturing and logistics hub for the much larger economies

of Argentina and Brazil. We export \$2 billion worth of goods to Paraguay each year, and enjoy a strongly positive bilateral trade balance. Paraguay's agricultural sector produces many of the same products as the United States, notably soy and beef cattle, creating opportunities for the export of advanced U.S. technology, agricultural services, and other synergistic trade relationships. Paraguayans admire the high quality of U.S. products, and a sustainably growing and inclusive Paraguayan economy will continue to increase demand for U.S. goods and services. If confirmed, I will work to expand our trade for the benefit of both nations. Paraguay's economic success advances U.S. economic success.

Paraguay and the United States have a long history of strong people-to-people ties, especially through the more than 5,000 Peace Corps Volunteers who have served there since the program began in 1966. If confirmed, I will also support the Peace Corps program in Paraguay, as well as the embassy's flourishing programs to support English language teaching and learning, science education, and higher education exchanges. These programs are especially valuable to reach the 44 percent of the Paraguayan population that is younger than 25 years of age. They help strengthen people-to-people ties, foster mutual understanding, and encourage greater engagement between our two nations.

I look forward, if confirmed for this position, to working closely with Congress to advance our national interests by further strengthening our positive relationship with the Republic of Paraguay as that nation builds its economy, strengthens its democratic institutions, confronts international criminal and terrorist actors, and plays an ever larger role on the international stage.

I would be delighted to respond to any questions you may have.