

Statement of Richard Carlton Paschall, III
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of The Gambia
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
November 14, 2018

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be the next Ambassador to the Republic of The Gambia. I am deeply grateful for the trust and confidence that the President and Secretary of State Pompeo have placed in me as their nominee to lead our nation's mission in The Gambia. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress and staff to advance our nation's national security and foreign policy interests.

Mr. Chairman, I have had the privilege to represent and serve our nation in the Middle East, South Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe in addition to several assignments here in our Nation's capital. Without the love and support of my family, such a career in service constantly on the move furthering our nation's national security and foreign policy objectives would have been much, much more difficult. I am the proud husband of a veteran, and she is with me today. My wife and best friend, Jane Ellen, is now a Foreign Service Officer with the United States Agency for International Development having retired from the U.S. Army as a Colonel. I'm also the proud father of two outstanding young men who are here today. CJ is an internet entrepreneur, and William is a Computer Science major in college. I owe a debt that can never be repaid to my parents who I am happy to have with me here today, Richard Paschall Jr. and Patricia Norris Paschall. They taught me about unconditional love, compassion, the importance of education, the value of hard work, and the importance of service. And I am so very grateful to my sister Cathy McCluskey and brother Stephen Paschall, and his son Walker, who made the trip from North Carolina with my parents.

This is a particularly momentous time in the Gambia's history – one that presents an opportunity to expand further and strengthen the growing community of African democracies. Free and fair elections in December 2016 – the results of which were ensured by the will of the democracies in the Economic Community of West African States to intervene when the defeated president rejected the electoral results – ended 22 years of authoritarian rule. The former president raided the treasury after pursuing policies for years that bankrupted the country and put it heavily in debt, and made it an international pariah due to his disdain and disrespect for the rights and the will of the Gambian people. Today, The Gambia,

with the support of the international community including the United States, is working to create a truly democratic state operating under the rule of law, with respect for human rights, and investing in its greatest resource – its people.

President Adama Barrow has ushered in a new era of openness and transparency, and expressed dedication to the democratization of his country. His administration has begun a process to account for the abuses of the past by establishing a Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission which was launched just last month. A Commission of Inquiry has held hearings for just over a year to explore the financial crimes committed under the previous president's rule. The National Assembly passed legislation to create a new National Human Rights Commission. The judiciary now operates largely independently, and arbitrary arrests and detentions have been for the most part, though not completely, eliminated. Efforts are underway to reform the framework that underpins the business environment and improve the business climate. In one of his early acts, President Barrow released all political prisoners soon after taking office. This move underscores an important point - that the Gambian people admire America and American values such as freedom, democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, and promotion of education.

While the trajectory of these objectives is a remarkable, significant positive departure from previous troubling trends, The Gambia is really just at the beginning of what will be a long road to broad improvement of conditions in the country. The government faces significant challenges in terms of capacity to develop and implement reform initiatives that go well above and beyond the fiscal resources to do so. And the citizenry are enthusiastic for change after two decades of declining governance and economic performance, and desperate to see results. In this environment, it is critical that the United States speak forcefully and consistently in support of the positive changes, provide targeted expertise and assistance to the government and civil society to develop capacity in a wide range of areas, and work closely with like-minded countries interested in helping The Gambia to fulfill its promise. It will be important that international donors share this burden appropriately, be nimble to respond to emerging needs, flexible given the significant capacity limitations extant in the country, and well-coordinated to ensure no duplication of effort, or gaps through which the potential for success might fall. If confirmed, it will be a privilege to lead U.S. efforts, with our partners, to continue to build on the positive trajectory since The Gambia's return to democratic rule in 2017.

I look forward to working hard, if confirmed, to do what we can to help the government and people of The Gambia fulfill their ambitious agenda for peace and prosperity, and I pledge to persistently pursue the safety and security of our Embassy team and of private American citizens, and to advance U.S. interests in The Gambia. Among the great Americans making a difference every day in the lives of the people of The Gambia are Peace Corps Volunteers. In my experience, one of the most effective programs of the U.S. government is the Peace Corps, whose volunteers touch lives in ways most of us can only dream of, at the individual level. I will look for ways to underscore the difference our nation's Peace Corps Volunteers make each and every day in The Gambia. Working with the government and entrepreneurs of The Gambia, I will seek to expand opportunities for U.S. business to become active in The Gambia, and for Gambian businesses to take advantage of the reinstated eligibility under the African Growth and Opportunity Act. And I will work to support the professionalization of the Gambian security services to help better ensure that respect for fundamental human rights is the norm and not the exception. This is particularly important in The Gambia, where positive reform of the security services will further bolster democracy and rule of law, serve as a force for stability in the region and beyond, and help to ensure that the country never again descends to a state of repression.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be honored to respond to any questions.