

**Statement of Linda Tagliatela  
Ambassador-Designate to Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, the  
Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, the Federation of Saint Kitts and  
Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
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Mister Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Kerry for their confidence and support, as well as to the members of this Committee for their consideration. I look forward to speaking with you today about my qualifications; the myriad opportunities and challenges before us in Barbados and the nations of the Eastern Caribbean; and, if confirmed, how I can best work with the U.S. Congress to strengthen our already robust engagement in the region.

Throughout my life, my family, including my parents Leon and Anne Swartz, has been an essential source of support. Without their love, encouragement, and belief in me, I would not be here today.

Mr. Chairman, I have had the privilege of serving our country for over 40 years, both as a career Civil Service employee and Foreign Service Officer. It is a career that has afforded me the opportunity to see the inner workings of our government from my early days as a management analyst at the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) until most recently as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Human Resources and Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer. My proven track record in resource management; Embassy operations and auditing; and workforce planning has equipped me well for the responsibilities of a chief of mission. Over four decades of service, I have acquired a deep understanding of how to effectively match resources, people, and policies to best advance our national security interests, protect the safety of Americans abroad, and advance the broad set of policy objectives that characterize our relations with the countries of the Caribbean.

And, as importantly, this experience has given me a keen appreciation of two fundamental things: first, whatever our rank, position, or title, as public servants, our job is to protect and advance U.S. interests and values and to faithfully serve the American people. This means—and this is my second point—being good stewards of taxpayer dollars. If confirmed, these will be my guiding principles.

Our nation is most effective when we lead by example and in accordance with our values. This is what I have sought to do throughout my career and what I will seek to do if confirmed as Ambassador.

If confirmed, I will proudly represent the United States in Barbados and the six nations of the Eastern Caribbean, a region with which we share strong cultural, historical, and familial ties. The Caribbean diaspora community in the United States, with its intellectual leadership, food, vibrant music, and sense of identity and community is a vital part of many of our cities, from Miami to New York and beyond. Since achieving independence in the 1960s and 1970s, the nations of the Eastern Caribbean have thrived as democracies and maintained friendly and productive relations with the United States. They also play an important role in supporting democracy and human rights across the hemisphere.

If confirmed, my top priority as Ambassador will be the safety of American citizens residing in and visiting the Caribbean. The Eastern Caribbean hosted nearly two million tourists last year, the vast majority of whom were U.S. citizens. Additionally, a large number of our citizens live in the Caribbean, whether in retirement, as students at one of the many universities in the islands, or as dual-nationals. I will also work to ensure the security of U.S. government personnel at our Embassies in Barbados and Grenada as well as the Peace Corps volunteers serving in St. Lucia, Grenada, Dominica, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

I am also committed to strengthening the safety and security of our Caribbean partners. If confirmed, I will continue our efforts to bolster citizen security through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative. Threats to citizen security in the Caribbean are all too familiar: transnational criminal organizations involved in drug-related crimes; systemic violence; corruption; weak judicial systems and a lack of respect for the rule of law; and, an increase in youth involved in criminal activities. Through Caribbean Basin Security Initiative programming and strong interagency cooperation, the United States will continue to support Caribbean nations in a whole-of-government, integrated approach that links citizen security, civil society development, and economic prosperity. If confirmed, I will

work with the Governments of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines to implement the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, including: the vigorous investigation of incidents of forced labor and sex trafficking; the prosecution and conviction of perpetrators; and the proactive identification of and provision of services to victims.

Several economic issues are having a deep impact on the island nations of the Caribbean. The first is the high cost of energy. Caribbean nations have some of the highest electricity costs in the world due to their almost exclusive reliance on imported diesel fuel. The Caribbean Energy Security Initiative, launched by Vice President Biden, seeks to increase the region's access to energy sector financing and improve governance and diversification of the islands' energy sectors.

Additionally, the region continues to experience stagnant economic growth with youth unemployment and underemployment rates in the region averaging between 25–40 percent. These nations are also susceptible to environmental shocks, such as hurricanes, which, in a matter of hours, can set these tourism and agriculture dependent nations back several years.

These challenges combine to create a difficult economic environment that prevents Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean nations from reaching their full potential and competing in the broader regional and global economies. If confirmed, I will work diligently to encourage the nations of the Eastern Caribbean to seek out less expensive and more sustainable sources of energy and to invest in job training, including career and technical training for youth.

As Ambassador, I would also work to promote fundamental freedoms and universal human rights, including the rights of the LGBTI communities. I will pay particular attention to empowering and improving the status of women in the Eastern Caribbean. Women in these countries, who are well educated, play a strong role in politics and social issues. However, once their education is complete, many women are either unable to find jobs or can only find work in lower status or lower paying positions. Domestic and sexual violence against women remain grave concerns in the region, causing disproportionate, adverse impacts on families and youth, with victims frequently unable to rely upon the formal justice sector to seek redress. Yet despite these obstacles, the women leaders in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean are extraordinary, and if confirmed, I will work to increase and improve the opportunities available to women and girls and other members of vulnerable communities.

Next year will mark the 55th anniversary of the Peace Corps: I would like to acknowledge the long-standing Peace Corps presence in the Eastern Caribbean. St. Lucia was among the first countries to receive volunteers in 1961 and continues to serve as the Peace Corps' headquarters in the region. Currently 63 volunteers work on literacy projects in Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines in those nations' most vulnerable and marginalized communities. If confirmed, I will promote and support the efforts of our Peace Corp Volunteers.

If confirmed, I look forward to representing the United States in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean and to working with you and your colleagues in Congress on behalf of the Administration and the American people to advance our shared interests in this important region.