

**Opening Statement for
Under Secretary of State for Management Nominee John R. Bass
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
December 1, 2021**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Risch, Distinguished Members of the Committee: thank you for this opportunity to appear before you as the President's nominee to be Under Secretary for Management. I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the opportunity to again serve the nation, if confirmed.

I'm joined today by my wife Holly, a fellow diplomat who has represented our nation in Afghanistan and five other countries. I am grateful for her love and support. My sister Kristin is with us today. We are joined in spirit by an extended family that includes the one we are blessed with by birth and marriage, and the family we have made, through shared service and sacrifice overseas.

I begin this morning by honoring the memory of the Marines, Navy Corpsman and soldier who died while protecting the rest of us working to evacuate fellow Americans and at-risk Afghans from Kabul. Their loved ones have been in our thoughts and prayers every day.

It has been an honor to serve three previous times as a presidential appointee. I welcome this new opportunity, subject to the advice and consent of the Senate, to give back to an institution that I love – but one that I and many colleagues have not always liked.

I swore my first oath to support and defend the Constitution in 1988. Since then, the world, and the issues and challenges at the center of American diplomacy, have changed a great deal. But *how* we work at State, as representatives of our government and as diplomatic practitioners, has not kept pace with the times.

The reasons for this are complex. They reflect the choices of multiple administrations on both sides of the aisle. The result is an institution that relies too heavily on its dedicated professionals to bridge the gap between what State's infrastructure, technology and practices enable – and what our responsibilities to the nation actually require. As the President, Secretary Blinken, this committee and many outside observers have observed – it is past time to remedy that.

If confirmed, I will do everything I can to prepare the State Department to tackle the challenges we will face in the coming years. Concurrently, with your support

and partnership, I will do my best to ensure the women and men of the Department have the guidance, and receive the resources they need today – to help our fellow citizens, protect the country’s interests, promote our prosperity and uphold our values in 195 countries and nearly 200 international organizations worldwide.

Much public attention focuses on State’s headquarters here in the capital and the remarkable work of thousands of talented civil and foreign service professionals. I believe the Department’s greatest impact, though, occurs well beyond the Beltway. Patriotic Americans and dedicated local staff in our embassies and consulates; colleagues working in 98 offices, in 31 states, across the country – they all serve our nation. The Department’s unstinting effort to bring over 100,000 Americans and other residents home during the pandemic, even while reducing our own staff, is a dramatic recent example.

If confirmed, I will work to reinforce our focus on the field. That includes doing everything possible to support and care for colleagues and families suffering from anomalous health incidents, as we work to uncover the cause of these incidents. It also means managing sensibly threats and risk so our people can engage, persuade and represent the nation in every environment overseas.

Diplomacy is a contact sport. Who we dispatch – to help Americans in harm’s way, to negotiate with governments and companies, to advance our interests – can matter as much as what they do or say. As Secretary Blinken recently underscored, our diversity as a nation – in backgrounds, gender, race, religion and ethnicity – is among our greatest competitive advantages. We sell ourselves short, and undercut our service to all Americans, if we fail to capitalize on it. I am committed to expanding efforts to attract talented Americans from all walks of life to join the Department’s team, enable them to thrive as representatives of the United States and support them throughout their careers, so that we truly reflect America.

We face significant challenges as a nation – and as the oldest cabinet Department. It will take sustained focus and resources for the State Department to most effectively advance our interests and help middle and working-class Americans prosper in the years ahead. In my prior appointments, I benefitted from close coordination with members of this committee and the wider Congress. If confirmed, I intend to work closely with you on these compelling priorities.

Thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you. I welcome your questions.