

Statement of Randi Levine
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to Portugal
Submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Tuesday, February 8, 2022

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Portuguese Republic.

I am deeply honored to be considered for this position. I am grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the confidence they have placed in me. If confirmed, I pledge to do my very best to serve our great country and to lead the U.S. Mission to one of our most reliable European partners.

Thank you, Senator Schumer, for your gracious introduction. I remember getting a call from you on our way to our son Ben's Bar Mitzvah years ago. You said: "Ben, you are a lucky boy! Your parents have worked hard to get you here, so make them proud."

Our children have indeed made us proud: Ben and his wife Zoe, our daughter Jessica and her husband Evan, our daughter Dara and her husband Jonathan, and our most precious treasures, our grandchildren Eli and Orly.

My husband, Jeff, is with me here today. He has been my partner and rock for more than 40 years. We are proof that the American dream is alive and well. Jeff's parents Irene and Irving, a cab driver, raised their four children in public housing in Brooklyn. My mother Wendy was an elementary school teacher and my father, Eddy Charno, owned a pharmacy in Greenpoint, Brooklyn down the block from where his

father Joe lived and worked when he emigrated from Poland in the early 1900s.

The Charno family has always believed in the importance of serving the community. A street in Brooklyn was renamed Charno Way to commemorate this history. My nomination as ambassador follows our family's longstanding commitment to service and would bring them so much pride and joy.

My road to public service was paved by the arts. I am a passionate arts advocate and supporter of using cultural exchanges to advance diplomacy. If confirmed, I will draw upon my extensive work at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery and the Meridian Center for Cultural Diplomacy to build partnerships that will advance American interests and enrich our bilateral relationship.

Portugal has been a strong U.S. partner for more than 200 years and was among the first countries to recognize U.S. independence. It is home to the longest continuously operating U.S. consulate in the Azores. Our partnership is built on shared values: a commitment to human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

As a founding member of NATO, Portugal is an essential player in strengthening our transatlantic relationships and defending against malign influences in the region.

Portugal is also a notable partner in global defense. It deploys thousands of troops overseas each year to NATO, the EU, the UN, and international peacekeeping efforts, including the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Portugal hosts the U.S. Air Force's 65th Air Base Group at Lajes Field in the Azores, an important outpost for transatlantic peace and security.

Portugal's collaboration with the Lusophone African countries offers the transatlantic alliance an opportunity to enhance regional security and promote mutual prosperity in the South Atlantic.

If confirmed, I will have three priorities:

My top priority will be the safety and security of Americans in Portugal, including the outstanding personnel and family members of Embassy Lisbon and our Consulate in the Azores. I will also work to enhance bilateral and regional security efforts.

Second, I will work to deepen our bilateral economic ties. Bilateral trade in goods between our two countries reached \$4.6 billion in 2020. The United States is Portugal's largest trading partner outside of the EU. Portuguese investment in the United States is significant, particularly in tech and renewable energy projects.

Third, I will collaborate with the Portuguese to address shared existential challenges, including fighting climate change and combating COVID-19. I will also work closely with Portugal to address any significant challenges that the People's Republic of China poses to our national security and align efforts to deter Russia's destabilizing activities.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this committee to strengthen our partnerships with Portugal and advance U.S. interests.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.