

**Statement for the Record**  
**Phyllis M. Powers**  
**Ambassador-Designate to Panama**  
**Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**July 27, 2010**

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

It is an honor to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Panama. I am grateful for the trust and confidence the President and Secretary Clinton have shown in sending my name to the Senate for your consideration.

With your permission, I would like to recognize my family, friends, and colleagues who have supported me throughout my career. I firmly believe that no one gets here alone and am confident I would not be here if they were not beside me.

The skills and experience acquired in my career in the Foreign Service have prepared me to serve in this distinguished position. If confirmed, I will embark on my fifth tour in the region. The seven years I spent in the U.S. Embassy in Colombia, as well as my time as the Deputy Chief of Mission in Lima, Peru, and most recently as the Director of the Office of Provincial Affairs in Iraq taught me the importance of developing a partnership with host governments to achieve our goals. I feel strongly that a culture of lawfulness is key to any strong democratic society, and I learned that we can be most helpful by working with other governments to help them build their own capacity to respond to the needs of their citizens.

U.S.-Panama relations are strong. Panama's location makes it a vital crossroad for the movement of people, goods, and ideas. Roughly two-thirds of the 14,000 ships that transit the Panama Canal each year are traveling to or from U.S. ports. As such, protecting the canal and Panama's core infrastructure is critical to the homeland security of the United States. For many years, the United States has been Panama's preferred commercial partner, and we want to maintain this relationship for the betterment of both our countries. The Trade Promotion Agreement, if approved by Congress, would also be very powerful tool. Beyond the TPA's trade benefits for both countries, the agreement directly supports our broader goals for Panama—such as encouraging transparency and seeking to ensure all citizens,

including the nearly 30 percent who continue to struggle in poverty, benefit from Panama's economic growth and maturing democratic institutions.

Just as the United States and Panama share a dynamic economic partnership that benefits both our economies, we also share a historic partnership that has produced unique ties between our peoples. In this spirit, if confirmed I will work to maintain this positive legacy and collaborate in areas of common interest, including education, health, the environment, and community service. The United States also shares the concerns of all Panamanians about the rise of crime, gangs, and violence as well as the corrupting influence of drug trafficking. If confirmed, I look forward to leading a strong interagency effort to protect our homeland by helping Panama in its efforts to combat drug traffickers and other criminals who would exploit Panama's growing transportation hub for illegal ends. Close cooperation with Panama in law enforcement and security has already yielded many successes, including increased narcotics seizures, a more effective police force, and enhanced ability to combat money laundering.

Protecting U.S. citizens is the first responsibility of any ambassador, and, if confirmed, I will ensure the U.S. Embassy in Panama City continues to provide a high level of service and attention to our citizens. More than 25,000 American citizens live and work full time in Panama and more than 109 U.S. companies operate there. Our diplomatic representation in Panama includes representatives from 22 U.S. agencies, including a Peace Corps contingent of approximately 140 volunteers who work at sites throughout the country.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before this Committee today. If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues to advance our nation's interests in Panama. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.