

**Testimony of Robert Mandell
Ambassador-Designate to Luxembourg
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
September 21, 2011**

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee: Good Morning.

I am honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to serve as the next Ambassador to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

I am grateful to the President and Secretary Clinton for their support and for the confidence they have placed in me.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee and with the Congress to continue and to nurture the strong relationship that exists between the United States and Luxembourg.

I am especially grateful to a distinguished public servant, Senator Bill Nelson, for his friendship and his introduction and support today. Even though he is not present today, I would also like to thank my longtime friend, former Senator Mel Martinez who has been very encouraging from the very start of the process.

I would also like to introduce and publicly thank my dear wife Julie, who has provided me support throughout my career.

I would also like to introduce our children Zachary and Xan, and my parents, Lester and Sonia Mandell, and Julie's parents, Gilbert and Joyce Walker. Several more of our family members have joined us this morning, which we really appreciate. Julie and I are very blessed to have our parents share this wonderful day with us.

My experience of over 20 years as the leader of my own and my family's business has taught me the value of human relationships in achieving success.

After practicing law for more than a decade, I started over as a laborer in my family's home building business and worked my way up the ladder over the course of several years. Starting in the field significantly affected my approach to business. It meant that I would wear a bright yellow shirt that

had “Bobby” written over the pocket and “Greater Homes” on the other side of the shirt, so I knew who I was and where I worked. I also got to drive a 6-year old pickup truck with no air conditioning. That way, my dad knew that I wouldn’t be sitting in the truck during the long hot days of summer. It also didn’t have a radio because he thought work should be entertaining enough.

This early experience taught me that it was essential to treat people fairly, build the right relationships, and by doing the right thing for the right reasons, engender the trust of those around you, especially the ones you worked with. After all was said and done, our company built over 10,000 houses, all in the central Florida area. These same leadership and relationship skills have served me well in my roles at a local, statewide, and federal level, having served for the past 2 years on President Obama’s Export Council.

If confirmed, I hope to bring those same skills to bear as Ambassador to Luxembourg.

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is a longstanding ally of the United States and a founding member of NATO, the United Nations, and the European Union.

Thanks to the enormous sacrifices of U.S. armed forces which liberated Luxembourg in World War II, there is a deep reservoir of goodwill towards the United States in Luxembourg.

Our bilateral relationship with Luxembourg is emphatically positive.

If confirmed, I will strive to continue our strong and productive relationship by maintaining effective outreach programs and developing relationships with the government, the business community, youth, and Luxembourg citizens and residents of every background. I have worked to develop the President’s National Export Initiative and our nation’s economic expansion by my service on the President’s Export Council over the past two years. If confirmed, I plan to continue working to increase American exports to Europe.

Luxembourg is a major financial center in Europe, second only to the United States worldwide in the mutual funds industry, managing over three trillion

dollars in net assets. Financial services comprise about 25 percent of Luxembourg's GDP.

Accordingly, the United States works closely with the Government of Luxembourg to combat the financing of terrorism and money laundering. Embassy Luxembourg has been engaged in negotiations to sign an agreement with Luxembourg on Preventing and Combating Serious Crime to guard against involvement of the financial industry in global criminal activity. If I am confirmed by the Senate, I will make conclusion of these negotiations and signing this agreement one of my first priorities.

In addition, if confirmed, I will encourage Luxembourg to continue to increase the transparency of its banking system.

As part of my public diplomacy strategy, if I am confirmed, I intend to reach out to a new European generation that has grown up since the end of the Cold War and the division of Europe into two opposing camps. I hope to work with them and with other Luxembourg citizens to develop a stronger transatlantic alliance that looks forward to a generation of peace, security, and prosperity.

Should I be confirmed, I plan to pursue opportunities to encourage new technologies, using the resources of both the United States and Luxembourg in medical diagnostics and healthcare, based on our respective leading roles in these fields. For the past 20 years, I have gained experience in this area by serving on the Board of Directors of Florida Hospital, one of our nation's largest hospitals, and on the Board of Directors of The Sanford Burnham Institute for Medical Research for the last 5 years.

I am excited by this chance to serve my country and grateful for this opportunity.

Madam Chairman, Members of the Committee, if confirmed, it would be my greatest honor to represent the United States in Luxembourg. Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.