

STATEMENT OF DAVID D. NELSON

AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO URUGUAY

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

December 1, 2009

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

I am deeply honored to appear before you as the President's nominee to be the Ambassador of the United States to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay. I am very grateful to President Obama and Secretary Clinton for their confidence and trust in sending my name to the Senate for your consideration. If confirmed by the Senate, I look forward to working closely with this Committee and with your colleagues in the Congress to advance our interests in Uruguay and in the region.

I grew up in Minnesota, where I still have close relatives. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin, I joined the Foreign Service. During my first assignment abroad I met my wife, Gloria, who has been a vital partner throughout my career and shares my excitement about this new challenge. Our son Alex grew up in the Foreign Service life, attending International Schools in three different cities, becoming fluent in Spanish and German, but keeping his feet grounded in

the United States. We are very proud of him and of his current work to obtain a Masters Degree at Boston University.

As a career Foreign Service Officer, I have been honored to serve my country in six previous overseas assignments, and in increasingly responsible domestic assignments in the State Department and in the National Security Council. Many of my assignments have focused on economic policy, ranging from promotion of development and economic growth to working to constrain the flow of funds to international terrorism. In all of my positions, both domestic and overseas, promotion of U.S. exports and business opportunities has been a priority, and if confirmed I intend to maintain that priority.

In my most recent assignment, as Acting Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs, it has been an honor to work closely with Secretary Clinton and the members of her team to address the full range of international economic policies, including development of a Global Food Security Initiative, and addressing the global economic crisis. In this position, I have also been blessed with the opportunity to lead a team of some 200 foreign policy professionals. The management lessons I have learned in this position and which I accumulated during 30 years in the Foreign Service, will, I believe, contribute to my ability to manage successfully the approximately 200 men and women, both Uruguayan and American, who work in the US Embassy in Montevideo. If

confirmed, I will place a high priority on ensuring that the U.S. Embassy is a showplace for best management practices.

The opportunity to be considered for this position is exciting. Uruguay is an example of stable democracy, not only by holding regular elections, as it is doing this month, but with a deep commitment to democratic values, civil rights, and civil society. Uruguayan leaders of all parties are dedicated to improving the situation of all Uruguayans, including through education and market-led economic growth. Uruguay's commitment to education is highlighted by its recent achievement of providing a laptop computer to every student. Furthermore, Uruguay is positively engaged with the rest of the world; remarkably, it is among the global leaders in the contribution of troops to Peacekeeping Operations throughout the world. If confirmed, it will be my great pleasure to work with Uruguay on all of those shared interests.

Following the current elections, Uruguay will have a new government next year. I am confident that the United States will work with that government to continue to build on our positive relationship, based on mutual interests and shared goals. Sometimes, agreement and mutual trust on the big issues grows from daily engagement on a multitude of relatively technical issues, in areas ranging from banking regulation to civil aviation, and from joint research on Antarctica, cancer, and alternative energy. If confirmed, I will certainly seek to continue and enhance

those many areas of cooperation, both for their own mutual value, and to support the habits of cooperation they develop between our two sovereign democracies.

It is particularly exciting for my wife, Gloria, and I to be considered for this position since, if confirmed, it will mean returning to the location of our first overseas assignment together. We were posted in Montevideo from 1982 to early 1984. I was the junior political officer and was given the human rights portfolio in what was then a military dictatorship. One of the most important elements of my job was to support the incipient reopening of the political landscape. The traditional political parties were exploring, indeed pushing the limits of political activity that the regime was just beginning to allow. I attended political gatherings whenever welcomed—not to indicate partisan support for any particular Uruguayan politician, but to demonstrate the U.S. government’s support for the political process itself and for the restoration of democracy.

Having played an admittedly minor, but deeply committed, role in the political transition a quarter of a century ago, it would be a deep personal honor for me to return to that now flourishing democracy as United States Ambassador. Back then I supported the Uruguayan reestablishment of democracy; now, if the Senate agrees, I would seek to strengthen, deepen and broaden the already strong relationship and areas of cooperation between our two democracies.

Thank you and I welcome any questions.