

**Testimony of David Girard-diCarlo**  
**Ambassador-Designate to Austria**  
**June 19, 2008**  
**Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to be United States Ambassador to the Republic of Austria. I am grateful for the confidence and trust that President Bush and Secretary Rice have placed in me to serve, if confirmed, as Chief of Mission. I also thank Senator Specter for his very generous introduction.

If confirmed, I would bring to this position more than 35 years' experience as a lawyer, an advocate, a leader and a manager. For the past 25 years, I have had the honor and privilege of leading and managing Blank Rome LLP. Currently, Blank Rome is comprised of approximately 1,200 professionals and non-professionals in eight offices within the United States and one office in Hong Kong. I am proud to report that during my tenure as the firm's leader, the firm grew more than six-fold and is, today, one of the top 100 law firms in the United States.

I believe that my management and leadership experience will enable me to advance the U.S. interests with Austria and help Embassy Vienna fulfill its bilateral mission. My experiences managing multi-location operations will enable me to assist Embassy Vienna as it provides joint management support to the U.S. Mission to the United Nations and the U.S. Mission to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna and as it also provides management and resource support for the nearby mission in Bratislava.

I believe it is noteworthy to comment that relatively early in my career, I was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) by the then Governor of Pennsylvania, Richard Thornburgh. Immediately after joining the Board, I was elected Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. During my three and a half year-tenure there, SEPTA employed approximately 7,000 people, had an operating budget of about \$500 million dollars, and had capital facilities worth several billion dollars.

As the only non-career professional among a cadre of career transportation professionals, I learned first hand the importance of valuing the commitment, talent, and dedication that those professionals brought to their jobs. I committed myself to making SEPTA a better place when I left than it had been when I joined. I believe I accomplished that goal. If confirmed, I believe my responsibility to the President, to the American people and to Embassy Vienna should be, and will be, to do everything in my power to leave Embassy Vienna a better place at the conclusion of my assignment.

In addition to my professional responsibilities, my experience over the past three decades has included my active participation in the business and cultural organizations within the communities in which I have lived and worked. I have served in leadership positions at the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, the Philadelphia Orchestra and Academy of Music, the Walnut Street Theatre, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts here in Washington, and the Arizona Heart Foundation in Phoenix – to name only a few.

Furthermore, I have always been committed to and actively involved with educational institutions in my community. At the request of Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, for five years, I chaired Business Leaders Organized for Catholic Schools, a Philadelphia-based organization which raised money for scholarships for children attending Catholic schools. I have also served on the boards of St. Joseph's University, Drexel University, Harcum Junior College and Villanova University School of Law.

I believe my civic activities and community involvement have given me a keen appreciation for the interconnections between the public sector and the private sector. I have learned that the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts and, when these two sectors work in concert with one another, together they enrich the lives and the spirit of the people in the community.

I would bring this experience and understanding to my new position if I am confirmed as Ambassador to Austria. Public diplomacy programs such as the Fulbright program and other academic, cultural, and professional exchanges work on those same interconnections to increase understanding and knowledge of the United States, not just government-to-government, but people-to-people, across a variety of sectors.

I look forward to assuring a distinguished beginning to Ambassador McCaw's initiative for a scholarship exchange program. This 10-year program would use

funds from the Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation for Austrian and American exchange students to study at universities and technical colleges in each other's country. If confirmed as Ambassador, I would support these programs so that the younger generation of Austria would better understand the many values and goals we have in common.

Mr. Chairman, Austria has a proud history and its capital, Vienna, is a world-renowned cultural center. Today, Austria serves as an exemplar of democracy, freedom, stability and prosperity. Though a small country, Austria has contributed to peacekeeping missions around the world. For example, in southeastern Europe it has contributed troops and assistance that are vital to the success of UN missions in Kosovo and Bosnia. Austria has a contingent of peacekeepers in Chad as part of the EU mission there and it has assisted in aiding victims of civil unrest in Darfur.

In this time of global insecurity, no issue is of more immediate importance than our collaboration in the fight against international terrorism and transnational crime. Austria is an active partner in this fight. Austria has sent police instructors to the Iraqi Police Academy in Jordan; has provided advisors in Afghanistan; and has deployed peacekeepers to the Golan Heights as part of the UN mission there. Together with the United States and the European Union, Austria operated two counterterrorism-related training programs for countries in Central Asia. If confirmed as Ambassador, I would continue to press for Austria's active participation in the Partnership for Peace and would urge Austria to work with NATO whenever our interests converge.

Austria faces terrorist threats just as we do in the United States and other democracies do. This is why we must work to forge strong ties and fight this threat together. Austria has provided extensive cooperation to U.S. law enforcement agencies and has supported regional anti-terrorism initiatives. If confirmed as Ambassador, I would work to strengthen information exchange and cooperation on counterterrorism, and I would work to expand outreach to populations vulnerable to radicalization and terrorist recruitment.

Mr. Chairman, this is a time of change in Austria. The European Union's enlargement eastward has shifted Austria to the center of Europe. Austria has strong historical and cultural ties with countries to its south and east and sees a role for itself in helping countries of these regions integrate successfully into an enlarged European Union. The United States encourages that integration, which is important to the stability of Europe as a whole.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee, Austria is a solid friend in Europe. If I am confirmed as Ambassador, I pledge to use my experience as a leader and manager to build on the strong relations our two countries have and to lead our U.S. Mission team in advancing America's interests and forging even closer ties between the people of the United States and the people of Austria. I look forward to this challenge and thank you for both this opportunity to appear before you and the opportunity to serve my country.

In closing, I want to thank my wife Connie, my best friend for more than 35 years, for her continuing support and counsel and for her enthusiasm with regard to this possible new venture in our lives.

I would be happy to answer any questions.