

**Testimony of David H. Thorne
Ambassador-Designate to the Italian Republic
and the Republic of San Marino
July 16, 2009
Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am greatly honored to be here today as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to Italy and to the Republic of San Marino. I am humbled by the confidence and trust that the President and Secretary Clinton have placed in me, and I pledge to you that if confirmed, I will work closely with the President and Congress to advance our nation's interests in Italy and to promote cooperation on issues of mutual concern.

I would like to introduce Rose, my wife of 38 years. My family has always been the central pillar of my life. I could not imagine doing this without them. If confirmed, she, my son William, and my daughter Emma will make an enormous contribution to the life of the Embassy and provide invaluable support to my efforts.

I have been blessed with an almost lifelong personal connection to Italy. I lived there for more than twenty years and have remained deeply connected ever since. My family and I moved to Rome in 1953, when my father, Landon Thorne Jr., was appointed by President Eisenhower to administer the Marshall Plan for Italy. I grew up in Rome learning fluent Italian and nurturing a deep appreciation and knowledge of Italy's culture, politics, and society. After my father left the Foreign Service, he owned and published the Rome Daily American, established and directed the Italian branch of Banker Trust Company, and served as trustee of the American Academy in Rome. We have continued to support the American Academy and the arts here and in Italy for over fifty years. I return often to Italy to share our family's legacy with the next generation. On a personal sports note, during my years in Italy I could not escape the infection of soccer mania. I played soccer in college and continue to play league soccer in New England. As long as they are not competing against the U.S. team, I remain an Italian-team "tifoso" (ardent fan) during European and World Cup play.

Italy has been like a second home to me. I am living proof of the close ties between Italians and Americans. The relationship between Italy and the United States has a

long and rich history that dates back to the arrival of the first Italian immigrants on these shores in the 1800s. A long-lasting friendship based on shared values of liberty, democracy, and economic resourcefulness developed between the United States and Italy after World War II. As our fifth largest ethnic group, Italian Americans still demonstrate their deep love and affection for Italy with support for Italian-American organizations on the local, regional, and national level. The State Department is working closely with these organizations, through a public private partnership with the National Italian American Foundation, to respond to the educational needs of the region of Abruzzo, Italy, in the aftermath of the earthquake. More Americans visit Italy than any other non-English speaking country. Our continuing friendship and alliance were re-affirmed by President Obama and Prime Minister Berlusconi at their meeting in Washington, DC and the President's meetings with President Napolitano and the Prime Minister in conjunction with Italy's hosting of the 2009 G8 Summit in L'Aquila.

If confirmed, I hope to harness this love for Italy with my pride in being a citizen of our great nation to promote American interests abroad. At this critical juncture in our foreign policy, President Obama has set a new tone for our engagement with other countries. In his recent speech in Cairo, the President emphasized the "need to use diplomacy and build international consensus to resolve our problems whenever possible." If confirmed, I will take on that charge personally and work to convey an America that listens to and collaborates with our allies and friends around the world.

Over the course of the last forty years as an entrepreneur, publisher, and an engaged citizen, I gained a deep understanding of our nation's business and political process and have been exposed to a broad spectrum of beliefs and values within the United States. I believe that understanding the diversity, complexity, and opportunity within our own country is critical to appreciating the position of other nations and peoples in order to conduct effective diplomacy.

Italy has been an important and steadfast friend and supporter of many of our foreign policy goals, both bilaterally and globally. Italy has been a long-standing partner in both civilian and military missions in Afghanistan and Iraq and is a strategic NATO ally. Italy is the sixth-largest troop contributor to International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, holds ISAF Regional Command-West, and has a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Herat Province. Italy has provided strong, sustained leadership of the PRT in Iraq's southern province of Dhi Qar. Prime Minister Berlusconi also recently stated that Italy will send 525 new troops to Afghanistan and will increase the number of Carabinieri to train

Afghani police forces, as a complement to the exceptional training Carabinieri have provided to Iraqi Security Forces. At the June Afghanistan-Pakistan outreach conference in Trieste, Italy successfully advanced international consensus on the need for a unified, coordinated multinational approach to bringing stability and security to both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. If confirmed as Ambassador, I will encourage Italy to continue its commitment to provide military personnel and reconstruction and development aid to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Italy is also a top-tier contributor to UN, NATO, and EU missions worldwide, including in Kosovo and Lebanon, where it commands UNIFIL forces. Italian military have rotated command of NATO's Kosovo Force since its inception in 1999 and currently contribute over 1900 personnel to missions there. The United States appreciates Italy's significant peacekeeping contributions and their pursuit of peace and stability in the Balkans. On the Israel-Palestinian question, Italy has been a loyal friend to Israel, hosts a growing community of Muslim immigrants, and strongly supports calls for a two-state solution and President Obama's full engagement in the Middle East Peace Process. Italy has also been active in its G8 presidency this year, and the United States has worked closely with Italy to shape the outcome of the summit and ministerial meetings. Italy's positions on a number of issues, including climate change and food security, track well with U.S. priorities.

Military cooperation between Italy and the United States is also excellent. My brother, Landon, served as Assistant Naval Attaché (Reserve) in Rome, and after college, I had the honor and privilege to serve in the United States Navy along with this Committee's Chairman, my friend John Kerry. Thus, I am keenly appreciative of the importance of this military alliance. Over 13,000 U.S. personnel are stationed at U.S. military bases hosted by Italy, and key component commands for USEUCOM and USAFRICOM are located in Italy. Our installations in Italy are critical to our efforts to help stabilize regions in the Middle East and North Africa.

While the United States and Italy cooperate closely on several issues, there are, however, certain Italian foreign policy positions which continue to concern us. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Italian government to work through our differences.

Ambassadors have a unique responsibility to advance U.S. interests internationally and to promote not only political, but also economic bilateral relations. The United States and Italy cooperate closely on major economic issues, including within the G-8. Italy was our twelfth-largest trading partner in 2008. Italy, however, faces

serious economic challenges, which have become more critical with the current economic crisis. If confirmed, I will use my experience as a businessman to deepen commercial ties between Italy and the United States and will build on Ambassador Spogli's Partnership for Growth initiative to continue to foster high-growth economic ventures in Italy.

If confirmed, I would also do my utmost to represent the United States faithfully and positively and to help restore and promote our image abroad. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to present to Italians a multi-faceted America that cherishes its freedoms, is tolerant of diverse beliefs and values, and is supportive of those who strive for opportunity and to have their voices heard. I will also work diligently, if confirmed, to ensure the safety of the tens of thousands of our citizens that work, reside, study, or travel in Italy each year.

The United States and Italy have much in common—a shared belief in representative government and in freedom of expression and the desire for a more stable and humane world. In reaching out to the Italian people, our public diplomacy efforts emphasize the enduring nature of our underlying shared values. With the United States facing an unprecedented number of political, military, and economic challenges, we need more than ever to strengthen our relationships with our allies and their populations and to create new relationships where they have not existed for some time. As Secretary Clinton clearly stated: “Robust diplomacy and effective development are the best long-term tools for securing America's future.” If confirmed, I will work with our Italian friends to address the grave challenges before us and will work to broaden our ability to reach out to diverse groups within Italian society. I can think of no greater honor and delight than helping to bring Italian and American ties even closer.

Madam Chair, Members of this Committee, thank you for granting me the honor of appearing before you today. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.