

Statement of  
John Tefft  
Ambassador-designate to Georgia  
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
May 24, 2005

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

It is my honor to appear before you today to discuss my nomination to be Ambassador to Georgia. It is a privilege to have been selected by President Bush and Secretary Rice for this assignment. Georgia is a country at the forefront of the President's democracy agenda. It is an example of what transformational diplomacy can achieve. Mr. Chairman, your support and that of the Congress has been critical to the success of the Rose Revolution in Georgia. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with you and the members of this committee to ensure that the promises of the Rose Revolution are met.

I would like to introduce my wife, Mariella, who in addition to her work as a biostatistician and nurse has been my partner throughout my thirty three year Foreign Service career. My daughter, Cathleen, and her husband, Andy Horowitz, are also here with me. Mr. Chairman, I would also like to note that, if confirmed, I will try to fill the shoes of one of our most capable diplomats in the Foreign Service, Dick Miles. I followed him as DCM in Moscow many years ago, and I'm honored to be following him again in this new important assignment.

Mr. Chairman, Georgia is a tremendous success story. The people of Georgia stood up in November 2003 and refused to accept the corruption and the cronyism that plagued their past. Since that time, Georgia has made incredible progress in a short time. During his visit to Tbilisi earlier this month, President Bush highlighted President Saakashvili's impressive list of accomplishments. Georgia has much to be proud of.

At the same time, Mr. Chairman, much remains to be done. First, Georgia must continue its commitment to build the **institutions of democracy** and ensure the **rule of law**. That is job number one in terms of making the Rose Revolution irreversible.

Georgia is an important ally in the **Global War on Terror and in Operation Iraqi Freedom**. It is vital that we build on this cooperation and help Georgia as it seeks **closer ties to NATO** and the European Union.

If confirmed, I want to help Georgia find ways to move beyond the problems of the past. I believe it is essential for **Georgia and Russia** to establish a new, constructive relationship based on **respect, shared economic interests and mutual security**. Georgia and Russia now have an opportunity to find a way forward on **removing Russian bases** from Georgian territory. I will do what I can to encourage both sides to make that possibility a reality.

For Georgia to succeed, it must ultimately have control of its territory to ensure the security of borders and its citizens. President Bush delivered a clear message in Tbilisi that now is the time for resolution of the separatist conflicts in Georgia. **A peaceful solution is the only answer to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but the *status quo* should not remain.**

The United States has invested heavily in Georgia since 1991 – and it is essential today that we remain supportive of Georgia’s progress now in order to consolidate its democratic efforts. I am hopeful that a Millennium Challenge Account compact will soon be concluded, with an aim toward reducing poverty and improving the economy. This agreement is a highly visible sign of our trust in Georgia’s potential.

I also want to note that the United States greatly values the central role Georgia plays in the East-West energy corridor. We are proud of the long-standing partnership we have established with Georgia to achieve this goal.

Mr. Chairman, there are many other issues in our bilateral relationship with Georgia. If confirmed, I will do my best to promote American interests in Georgia.

I thank you for your consideration, and look forward to answering any questions you have.