

TESTIMONY OF Anne E. Derse  
AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE TO THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA  
July 16, 2009  
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

I am deeply honored to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Lithuania. I am grateful to the President and Secretary Clinton for the confidence and trust they have placed in me.

I am pleased that my husband Hank, our nephew Jamie, my sister and brother in law Lisa and Dan Leifield, and two of our four children, Betsy and Jane, are able to be with us today. I know our son Will and oldest daughter Joy are with us in spirit as well. As children of the Foreign Service, I know our children appreciate, as I do, the honor of this nomination, and the important role of the confirmation process exercised by this Committee and the Senate.

I have had the great privilege of serving my country for 28 years as a career diplomat, working in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. My experience as an economic officer working with the European Union, and most recently, serving as Ambassador in a former Soviet Republic, equips me well to advance U.S. interests with Lithuania. If confirmed, I will do everything I can to enrich and strengthen

our partnership with Lithuania, a valued ally and strong democratic partner in a strategic part of the world.

The United States has long enjoyed a close bilateral relationship with Lithuania, founded on the strong personal and family ties between Lithuanian-Americans and their ancestral home, as well as on the bedrock of America's steadfast non-recognition of the illegal incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War.

In the 18 years since Lithuania re-established its independence, our relations have come a long way. The United States has worked closely with the Lithuanian people to help them rebuild democratic institutions and a market economy. The United States was proud to see Lithuania take its rightful place among free nations and become a full member of both NATO and the European Union in 2004.

Lithuania is a firm ally and supporter of regional democracy, helping others to follow the path it recently trod. It is dedicated to helping the Belarusian people build civil institutions and achieve an independent role in Europe. Lithuania is in the forefront of supporting Georgia's territorial integrity, and it is quietly working on the people-to-people level elsewhere in Eastern Europe, including in Ukraine and Moldova, to build stronger civil institutions.

Lithuania has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States in the fight against terrorism, including deploying troops to Iraq for over five years. Lithuania volunteered to send troops to Afghanistan even before joining NATO and remains an important partner there, operating its own Provincial Reconstruction Team in Ghor Province, and deploying its Special Forces in combat operations in the hostile south.

There is no clearer sign of the maturity of Lithuania's democracy than its assumption of the chairmanship of the Community of Democracies this year, the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2011, and the presidency of the European Union in 2013.

The Lithuanian Government is working to settle issues that linger from the days of war and totalitarian occupation, including the restitution of Jewish communal property and the preservation of a historic Jewish cemetery, burial ground of the ancestors of many American citizens. If confirmed, I will work to assist these important endeavors, drawing on my experience as the last U.S. Commissioner on the Tripartite Gold Commission, dedicated to resolving key issues stemming from the Holocaust.

Our relations with Lithuania ultimately rest on the strong friendship between our two peoples. I will, if confirmed, make public diplomacy a priority and work

to promote increased exchanges, connections, and mutual understanding between our nations -- business, educational, professional, and cultural.

In this time of global economic challenges, I will encourage strong bilateral commercial ties and support the interests of U.S. business if I am confirmed.

Drawing on my experience in Eurasian energy issues, I will work with Lithuania as it seeks to strengthen its energy security and build new energy links to Europe. I will ensure that American companies are given a fair opportunity to participate in new projects, including a proposed nuclear power plant.

If confirmed, I will work closely with all agencies represented at Embassy Vilnius and our colleagues in Washington, including Congress, to ensure sound management of the Embassy and its dedicated American and Lithuanian employees, and I will give vigorous attention to security issues and the protection of American citizens in Lithuania.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.