

Opening Statement to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Confirmation Hearing

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Chairman Kerry, Ranking member Lugar and members of the Committee ...

It is with humility that I come before this Committee as President Obama's nominee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of China.

It is a sign of the importance of the bilateral relationship between our two great nations that the president has nominated a current member of his cabinet to serve in this new capacity. I want to thank President Obama for his support and confidence in me.

I am proud to be joined today by my family: Mona and our three children, Emily, Dylan and Madeline.

No matter where public service has taken us – from one Washington to the other, and now on to Beijing – they - especially Mona – have been the irreplaceable constants: providing love and support.

I also know that if my father Jimmy were still alive, he would have been proud, if I am confirmed, to see his son become the first Chinese-American U.S. Ambassador to the country of his and my mother's birth.

My father came to America as a very young boy. He joined the U.S. Army before the outbreak of WWII and was part of the Normandy Invasion and some of the fiercest battles in France. After the War he returned to China where he met and married my mother. He brought her back to Seattle to start a family.

China is a nation they would hardly recognize from their childhoods – filled with ultra-modern cities where hundreds of millions have been lifted out of poverty.

Let me be clear: The Administration welcomes a strong, prosperous, and successful China.

But this new status comes with important responsibilities.

This Administration seeks to engage China on regional and global affairs to advance international peace and stability – and in ways consistent with prevailing international rules, norms, and institutions.

As Vice President Biden said recently, how the U.S. and China cooperate will define in significant part how we deal with the challenges the world faces in the 21st century.

If confirmed by the Senate, I pledge to help build the positive, cooperative and comprehensive relationship that Presidents Obama and Hu have agreed our two countries should aspire to.

For more than a decade, opening markets in China has been a focus of mine – as governor of the State of Washington, as an attorney in private practice and as Commerce Secretary.

If confirmed, helping U.S. companies do more business in China will be a big part of what I do every day. Increasing exports to China will help create jobs and economic growth here at home. But it will also improve the quality of life of the Chinese people by providing more access to American-made products and services – the best in the world – and help China's leaders reach their modernization goals.

At the same time, as Ambassador, I will also work to expand bilateral cooperation on a host of critical international issues, from stopping nuclear proliferation to rebalancing the global economy to combating climate change.

We've made significant progress on a number of those concerns, even as challenges remain.

And our work together on North Korea and Iran – though we continue to encourage China to do more – is an important sign that we can cooperate to address more sensitive issues in the U.S.-China relationship.

While there are many areas of collaboration, there are also areas of vigorous disagreement.

That includes human rights, where we have significant concerns about China's actions in recent months, especially the crackdown on journalists, lawyers, bloggers, artists and religious groups.

The protection and the promotion of liberty and freedom are fundamental tenets of American foreign policy. If confirmed, I will clearly and firmly advocate for upholding universal human rights in China.

And as much as the job of Ambassador is to communicate our position to China's leaders, I also pledge to reach out to the people of China. My goal will be to directly express the values that America stands for and the desire for ever-closer bonds of friendship between our two peoples.

I'll close by saying that, should I be confirmed, I pledge to work closely with this Committee. And I hope to host each of you and your staffs in China.

We have an outstanding team of career professionals at the Embassy and Consulates there. If granted the privilege of serving, I will do my best to honor their work, as they pursue and promote American interests and objectives in China.

We have much to do.

Chairman Kerry, Ranking Member Lugar, and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to address you. I welcome your questions and comments.