

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama Nominates Gary Locke to Be Ambassador to China

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama has announced the nomination of Commerce Secretary Gary Locke to become the next U.S. ambassador to the People's Republic of China. If approved by the Senate, he would become the first Chinese American to hold the post.

Locke would succeed Ambassador Jon Huntsman, the former Republican governor of Utah, who recently asked to step down from his post in China, Obama said at a March 9 White House ceremony attended by Locke and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

"As one of the world's fastest-growing economies, our relationship with China is one of the most critical of the 21st century," Obama said. "Continued cooperation between our countries will be good for America, it will be good for China, and it will be good for the world."

"As the grandson of a Chinese immigrant who went on to live the American dream, Gary is the right person to continue this cooperation," the president added.

Obama also praised the work accomplished by Huntsman in Beijing. "Jon has been an outstanding advocate for this administration and this country," the president said. "I am grateful for his service."

Locke's grandfather left China more than 100 years ago aboard a steamship bound for the United States, where he worked as a domestic servant for a family in Washington state in return for the opportunity to learn English. "A century later, his grandson will return to China as America's top diplomat," Obama said.

But Locke also became the first Chinese-American state governor when he was elected in Washington state in 1996, and worked during those years to attract jobs and business to his state, the president said.

Locke joined the Obama administration in 2009 to be the president's chief advocate for America's businesses and specifically its exports abroad. As part of that assignment, Obama said he asked Locke to continue to make progress on the U.S.-China bilateral relationship.

During the past two years, Locke has overseen an increase in American exports, and particularly exports to China, a country with which the United States recently signed trade deals that will support 235,000 American jobs, Obama said. Locke was also the president's lead official for his National Export Initiative, which is designed to

make the United States more competitive globally in trade and, over five years, double U.S. exports of goods and services. In 2010, the United States increased exports to China by 34 percent.

"My father never imagined that one of his children could ever serve as the secretary of commerce in the United States of America," Locke said at the White House announcement. "And he was beaming with pride, Mr. President, the day you presided over my swearing-in ceremony."

Locke said his father, a combat veteran of World War II who served in Europe, died in January. "It would be one of his proudest moments to see his son named the United States ambassador to his ancestral homeland," he added.

"I'm going back to the birthplace of my grandfather, my father, my mom and her side of the family, and I'll be doing so as a devoted and passionate advocate for America, the country where I was born and raised," Locke said.

Muhtar Kent, chairman and chief executive officer of the Coca-Cola Company and also the chairman of the U.S.-China Business Council, praised Obama's choice for ambassador for his experience helping to promote American business in China and his effectiveness as commerce secretary.

"Secretary Locke's leadership roles in business and government, combined with his recent success in strengthening U.S.-China commercial relations, makes him ideally suited to be a strong and effective ambassador to China," Kent said. "Over the long run, innovation, economic growth and diplomatic harmony are most effectively achieved by free and fair trade and open dialogue. For these reasons, we are extremely pleased to see Secretary Locke nominated for this vital role."

Locke's nomination will be sent to the U.S. Senate and to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where a confirmation hearing will be held. If his nomination is approved by the committee — and it's likely it will be since he also had to pass a confirmation hearing and Senate approval to become commerce secretary — it will be voted on by the full Senate.

Vice President Biden Says U.S. Strongly Supports Russia's WTO Bid

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Vice President Biden said the United States is a strong supporter of Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Obama

administration also wants to end U.S. restrictions on bilateral trade that were enacted during the time of Russia's predecessor, the Soviet Union.

"The primary purpose of my visit is to explore how we can resolve the remaining challenges in our economic relationship because they must be resolved," Biden said March 9 at a roundtable discussion with Russian and American business leaders in Moscow.

"The United States strongly supports Russia's accession to the WTO. And we are working with Russian negotiators in Geneva to move this process forward," he said, adding that "real progress" is being made on longstanding areas of disagreement such as agricultural trade and the enforcement of intellectual property rights.

In addition, the vice president said the Obama administration strongly supports freeing Russia from the provisions of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the Trade Act of 1974. The amendment put limits on trade with countries that restricted emigration rights, as the Soviet Union did at the time.

"We are aware of the benefits that will flow to U.S. companies from a freer and more open trade regime between the United States and Russia," and those benefits will extend worldwide, Biden said.

He said investors and companies "are looking not just for better trade policies but for assurances" that the legal system in countries they want to invest in "treats them fairly and acts on their concerns swiftly."

For that reason, the United States is working with Russian officials and business leaders to improve the investment climate, promote the rule of law and "tackle some endemic corruption" in Russia.

In July 2009, President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev created the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission. The commission includes the Business Development and Economic Relations Working Group, which has been addressing ways to remove trade barriers and to encourage investment, strengthen intellectual property protection and facilitate the development of small businesses in both countries.

The commission "is an important venue for our intergovernmental efforts. And we are using it to develop a more adept cadre of managers on both sides of the Atlantic, to improve our procurement systems and to address issues that you and your colleagues have raised, such as the difficulty of obtaining visas," Biden said.

Biden met later March 9 with President Medvedev and praised the improved relations between the United States

and Russia during the first two years of the Obama administration, which have seen cooperation on arms control measures like the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) and efforts against the nuclear activities of North Korea and Iran.

President Obama "wants me to make it clear we wish to continue the progress, this time on the economic front," Biden said.

Russia's accession to the WTO is "the most important item on our agenda," he said, and U.S. officials "are not being passive" on the effort to repeal the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

The vice president also told Medvedev that the United States has high expectations for Russia, which are "born out of admiration and respect."

With Cooperation, APEC Economies Can Rise Together, Secretary Clinton Says

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the 21 economies in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum share a common interest in increasing business opportunities across the region, and urged members to embrace long-term strategies that will benefit everyone. She also said the United States will use its year as host of the APEC summit to "push this organization to do more to deliver useful, tangible results."

Speaking in Washington March 9, Clinton said the United States and its partners in APEC are looking for more opportunities to do business with each other.

"That is good news. We are well positioned to rise together, to achieve greater prosperity in partnership, to offer all of our people a chance at a better future. But to do that, we need to decide whether we will embrace strategies that pay off for all of us, while resisting the impulse to embrace quick fixes at the expense of long-term gains," she said.

The Obama administration believes that the principles of openness, freedom, transparency and fairness "are critical to supporting long-term, high-impact, inclusive growth," Clinton said.

An open system invites economic participation from entrepreneurs, investors, workers and consumers worldwide and invites the most growth, while a free system minimizes the barriers to trade and investment, Clinton said.

Without transparency, “corruption flourishes, regulations can be applied arbitrarily, [and] small-business owners may discover that some rules change without warning or apply to them but not to others,” she said.

The United States also stands behind the principle of a fair economic environment where “businesses rise or fall based on honest competition rather than government manipulation,” and where intellectual property rights are enforced and protected so that innovation and invention is encouraged, she said.

No economy perfectly reflects these principles, Clinton said, including that of the United States. “But we believe that together these principles ensure the best circumstances for all nations to rise, from emerging economies to those that are highly developed.”

The United States also supports those principles “because we want to see the entire world – not just a small slice at the top – get richer and stronger. From the computer programmer in the United States to the electronics manufacturer in China to the service provider in Vietnam to the miner in Peru, we know that our futures are entwined. Our people will rise or fall eventually together. And we each have a stake in each other’s success,” she said.

In November, President Obama will host the leaders of the APEC economies in Hawaii for the group’s annual summit. Clinton said the United States intends to use its year as the APEC host to advance common interests and get tangible results.

APEC can take steps to reduce the “time, cost and uncertainty of moving goods through regional supply chains.” Clinton said. APEC economies can achieve environmentally sustainable growth “by reducing barriers to trade in environmental goods and services, stopping illegal logging, eliminating inefficient fuel subsidies and facilitating trade in remanufactured products to reduce waste and save energy.”

The United States wants to help APEC economies improve their regulatory practices, prevent technical trade barriers and increase regulatory cooperation with a special focus on emerging technologies. It also wants APEC to combat poverty through measures such as “ensuring that none of our economies impose export restrictions on food,” to help prevent destabilizing spikes in global food prices, she said.

No economy can afford to wait in addressing the need for environmentally sound practices, in having an economic growth that is balanced and inclusive, and in investing seriously in knowledge-based industries, Clinton said.

“Economies at all stages of development need to be dealing with these issues now because their repercussions are already evident in deforestation, food insecurity, social inequality and political instability. And we all face worldwide growing problems of underemployment,” she said.

If the world’s economies are to continue to make progress and realize the benefits of free trade and investment, “we must decide how we will work together, what rules we will adopt, what principles we will abide by and what behavior we will encourage and discourage in ourselves and in each other,” Clinton said.

Those questions need to be answered on the levels of individual economies and through the larger global economic community, and “APEC provides a forum for reaching those answers,” she said.

Security Adviser Praises American Muslims’ Contributions

By M. Scott Bortot
Staff Writer

Washington – Denis McDonough, the president’s deputy national security adviser, traveled to one of the country’s largest mosques to talk about President Obama’s approach to combating terrorism and to praise American Muslims for their contributions to strengthening America.

“Since the September 11th attacks, a number of individuals inspired by al-Qaida’s ideology and involved in supporting or plotting terrorism were stopped, in part because of the vigilance of members of local communities, including Muslim Americans,” McDonough said March 6 to a multifaith audience in Virginia at the All Dulles Area Muslim Society, known as the ADAMS Center, which has a long record of condemning terrorism in the United States and overseas. “The bottom line is this: When it comes to preventing violent extremism and terrorism in the United States, Muslim Americans are not part of the problem; you’re part of the solution.”

McDonough also highlighted the contributions of American Muslims to the country and their communities.

“You create jobs and opportunity as small-business owners and executives of major corporations. You enrich our culture as athletes and entertainers. You lead us as elected officials and members of Congress,” McDonough said. “And no one should ever forget that Muslim Americans help keep America safe every day as proud soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen. Indeed, some of these heroes have made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation and now rest in our hallowed national cemeteries.”

McDonough's speech comes ahead of hearings by the House of Representatives' Committee on Homeland Security on radicalization in the American Muslim community. Committee Chairman Peter King, a New York Republican, will hold the first of the hearings March 10. The prospect of those hearings has caused some concern in the Muslim community and for those worried about radicalization.

Supporters and critics of King's hearings rallied in the New York City area March 6. The New York-based Coalition to Honor Ground Zero, an organization that seeks to investigate and expose radicalism in the American Muslim community, praised King's efforts.

"The Coalition to Honor Ground Zero wishes to express its gratitude to Congressman King, new chair of the House Homeland Security Committee, for initiating upcoming hearings on the well-documented rise of Islamic radicalization in America," a statement on the coalition's website says. "Representative King, a fair and serious man, has spoken out and taken action in Congress on anti-American terrorism and jihad for many years."

In contrast, the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), an American Muslim public service agency, said on its website that King's hearings have the potential to "alienate Muslim Americans instead of engaging them as an important resource in the war on terror." The organization praised the role of American Muslims in public life and expressed concern over possible repercussions from the hearings.

"Muslim Americans make vital contributions every day. They teach our children, work in hospitals, and protect the public safety as police officers and firefighters. They love this country just as every American does and should not be placed under suspicion of terrorism because of their religious beliefs or ethnic background," MPAC's website says. "Unfortunately, Rep. King's hearings would do just that."

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