

Statement of J. Rufus Gifford
Ambassador Designate to Denmark
Before the
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 25, 2013

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Johnson, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for permitting me this opportunity to appear before you as the President's nominee to be United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark. It is a tremendous honor to be asked to serve in this post and I thank President Obama and Secretary Kerry for their confidence in me.

When I was ten years old my parents asked me what I wanted for my birthday. Expecting the typical answer of games or toys, they were surprised to hear my answer. All I wanted was a trip, just the three of us – leaving my brothers and sisters at home - to Washington, DC. I got my wish. I remember standing wide-eyed watching the Senate in session, touring the Reagan White House and walking the grounds of the Jefferson Memorial at night. My fascination with government and politics was already well established but it was this trip when I knew I just had to be part of it.

I am joined here today by the two people who took me on this first trip, my Mom and Dad along with my partner, Dr. Stephen DeVincent who is taking a day off from his veterinary practice to be here. My one regret today is that my paternal grandparents could not be here. Through their frequent travel to Denmark, my grandparents fell in love with Copenhagen and the country, and would often regale us as children with stories of their experiences. To me Denmark seemed too good to be true, a land of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales. Turning the fantasy into reality, sitting here today, I wish more than anything that they could be here with us.

I grew up in Manchester, Massachusetts, a son of a banker with an eagerness to pave his own path. After graduating from Brown University in 1996, my career has taken me to Los Angeles, Washington DC and Chicago. Throughout my career, whether when I was working in the entertainment industry, I was self-employed or in politics, I have prided myself on three things:

- 1) Teambuilding;

- 2) Setting and exceeding goals;
- 3) Establishing new and more innovative ways to accomplish the mission.

If confirmed, I hope to bring the professional skills I have built over the course of my career to the Embassy in Copenhagen. I believe that leadership means investing in each and every one of your employees; it's about management and creating an atmosphere where teamwork and collaboration can thrive.

I believe in pursuing a specific set of goals that are aggressive yet achievable. The status quo is never good enough. Success is not just about maintaining the status quo, it's about promoting new ideas and thinking outside the box. In my mind, innovation in all its forms is vital to success.

Diplomatic relations between in the United States and Denmark began in 1783 when Denmark negotiated a commercial treaty with our new country. Since then, the relationship between the United States and the Kingdom of Denmark has endured and thrived.

Why is that? A large part of the answer can be found in the fact that we share common principles and ideals, value our comprehensive partnership both politically and economically, and are committed to leading by example throughout the world.

If confirmed, my overall goal is to maintain and build upon that relationship. I believe that, as good as our bilateral relationship is, there will always be more to do.

My goals for the mission are as follows:

- 1) To maintain and strengthen the strong relationship between the countries, focusing on our partnership to resolve and prevent conflicts abroad, stabilize regions in conflict, and foster democratic development, tolerance, and respect for human rights.

One cannot help but be impressed at the outsized contributions the Danes make across the board to global peace, security, and development. Denmark is a country of fewer than 6 million people, but it is not shy about investing its resources and manpower in efforts to promote stability around

the world. As close NATO allies, the United States and Denmark are committed to each other's security and stand together in critical crisis areas worldwide. Danish soldiers and civil servants stand shoulder to shoulder with our service men and women today in Afghanistan, and Denmark's support of the missions in Kosovo and Libya has also been critical.

Denmark's significant contributions to international peace and security also come in the form of stabilization and development assistance programs in West and East Africa as well as the Middle East. The Danes are leaders in Scandinavia and in Europe as a whole in addressing the root causes of extremism and are key partners in countering the threat of terrorism.

If confirmed, my goal will be to ensure this partnership remains and is strengthened.

2) Trade and Economic Prosperity.

We must not just focus on the bilateral relationship in this ever-changing world but also the multilateral relationship. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership – or TTIP – will be a significant focus of our work in the coming months. President Obama called TTIP a potential “groundbreaking partnership” while creating “hundreds of thousands of jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.”

While the negotiations are between the United States and the European Union, the support of EU member states will be crucial as well. Denmark is a logical partner in this incredibly bold initiative. The English translation of “Copenhagen” is actually “Merchants’ Harbor.” Denmark is a country built upon centuries of trade. Like us, the Danes know that when we break down barriers to trade, we improve our ability to raise standards and increase prosperity around the world. I am not naïve about the work ahead -- it will be an “all hands on deck” endeavor. But considering the strong relationship between the United States and Denmark, we can help support an initiative that will lead the way to creating more jobs and growth on both sides of the Atlantic.

But we cannot center our business relationship on TTIP alone. The United States is Denmark's third largest trading partner. More than 250 Danish companies have subsidiaries in the U.S. employing over 35,000 Americans. We must continue to build our economic partnership, focusing

on emerging industries such as information technology, bio technology, and clean energy. Secretary Kerry has called on the State Department to “double down” on economic diplomacy. That means engaging both the political and economic decision-makers in Denmark to advance opportunities for U.S. businesses.

3) Leading by example with innovation, technology and sustainability.

The partnership here between our two countries is vast. Denmark is a leader in medical research and technology. The Danes are also leaders in wind energy, in smart grid technology, and energy efficiency. I am passionate about furthering this relationship, creating alliances between the smartest minds in science and medicine in Denmark and the smartest minds here at home with the ultimate goal of making the planet safer, cleaner and smarter.

In addition, if confirmed, I will also reach out to Greenland and the Faroe Islands. We will continue to strengthen our bonds with these parts of the Kingdom of Denmark, where innovation, technology and sustainability can extend our commercial and economic ties.

Mister Chairman and Members of the Committee, by investing in teamwork, by setting smart and strategic goals, and by pushing the edge of the envelope, we can achieve these goals and ensure that the relationship between our two great countries -- 230 years old – is even stronger 230 years from now.

Again, thank you for permitting me to appear before you. I am truly honored by this opportunity. If confirmed, I will do my very best to represent the United States – and I would hope to meet with you again in the future to report on our continuing partnership with Denmark.

I look forward to answering any questions you may have.