

Statement by James Culbertson
Ambassador-designate to the Kingdom of the Netherlands
Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
June 19, 2008

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of this Committee: I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. I am grateful for the trust President Bush and Secretary Rice have shown in nominating me to represent our country to one of the oldest and strongest allies of the United States.

Please allow me to introduce my wife, Germaine. She will be an enormous asset to me if I am confirmed, a most gracious representative of our country to the people of the Netherlands. Also, we have with us today our daughter Blair, our son-in-law James, and our two grandsons, William and George Robbins.

Since graduating from The Citadel in 1960 and serving in the Army as an officer in the military intelligence branch, I have maintained a keen interest in the politics and foreign policy interests of our country. If confirmed, I will bring my professional experiences and lifelong interest in community service to bear as Chief of Mission for our embassy in The Hague.

As a six year board member of the American Council of Young Political Leaders, which was composed of an equal number of young Democrats and

young Republicans, I was a member of three State Department-sponsored delegations to Europe. In 1967 I first saw the Berlin Wall and went through Checkpoint Charlie for a brief visit to East Berlin. The stark image of communism supposedly at its best contrasted sharply with the freedom we enjoy, and remains vivid with me to this day. In 1970 our visit included stops in The Hague and Amsterdam. We were at NATO Headquarters in Brussels in 1974 and also visited to London and Paris. During all of these trips we were hosted by young European leaders and their governments.

For eight years from 1985-1992 I served on the Governor's Economic Development Board in North Carolina. We undertook trade missions to other countries as well as receiving trade missions to our state.

For the last twenty years, I have been on the Board of Trustees for The Fund for American Studies. We have sponsored summer courses for college students from across America and the world since 1970 at Georgetown University, which teach free markets, democratic government and journalism. We initiated similar arrangements with universities in Prague in 1991, in Greece in 1996 and in Hong Kong in 2000. Our Greek institute, which is held on the island of Crete, is our most unique. It is comprised primarily of Israeli and Arab students. Many arrive literally hating their counterparts from the other confession, but by the closing week, they are

dancing and partying together. It is our fervent hope that one day they will be leaders in their countries and that this experience will hasten their living together peacefully.

For the last three years I have served on the American Battle Monuments Commission and have visited several cemeteries in France and Italy. Each is a moving reminder of our dedication to freedom and the sacrifices we have made to keep it secure.

For twenty eight years I owned a company which I started in 1972. We primarily sold financial software, but also sold the computers, printers, networks, etc. which the customer needed. Being a “one stop shop” gave us an advantage over our large, national, competitors who sold software only. My experience as the owner of a medium-size firm provided insight into the challenges of management and successful client relations.

I would now like to offer a few words on how I would like to build upon our strong and enduring relationship with the Netherlands.

The Dutch share our commitment to uphold freedom and alleviate poverty around the world. Leaders of a major military contingent in the dangerous southern region of Afghanistan, the Dutch are also significant development partners in Afghanistan, Iraq, Latin America, and Africa. I will

strive to enhance our military and development cooperation and expand Dutch support for peace, security, and democracy around the globe.

Since the tragic events of 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks in Europe, the Dutch have devoted increasing resources to counterterrorism and law enforcement. Six U.S. law enforcement agencies are represented at our mission, and I will work with these professionals to deepen law enforcement ties to combat terrorism, narcotics trafficking, human trafficking, and financial crimes.

The Netherlands, a nation of fewer than 17 million residents, it is a key trading partner of the United States. As centers of global finance and innovation, we have invested billions of dollars in each other's economies and created hundreds of thousands of jobs. I intend to facilitate continued trade expansion and will explore new investment opportunities for U.S. firms.

Our Embassy has a goal to promote a greater and more favorable understanding of the U.S. and its policies. I would like to expand on a program of dialogue and exchange that has won rave reviews from leaders in the Dutch Muslim community and contributed to enhanced mutual understanding.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you. With your consent, I pledge to serve our country and nurture our valued relationship with the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the best of my abilities.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.