

**Testimony of William C. Eacho, III
Ambassador-Designate to Austria
Before the
Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

July 28, 2009

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

It is my privilege to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to be the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Austria.

I am grateful for the confidence and trust that President Obama and Secretary Clinton have placed in me. I would like to thank Senator Warner for his generous introduction.

I would like to take this moment to introduce and thank my wife, Donna, for her support in this new endeavor, and also thank my three sons for their support, two of whom are here today: Greg and David. My son Doug is studying in France this summer, but I know he is here with us in spirit.

If confirmed, I will take great pride in serving and representing our country. Both of my parents served in our military, my father in the Navy and my mother in the Marines. I am sure they would be proud to see me do my part.

If confirmed, I will bring to this post more than thirty years of experience in leading and managing business and not-for-profit endeavors. I built a food distribution business to a position of national prominence, and led the world's leading international foodservice distribution cooperative. My professional experience has deepened my appreciation for international trade and global economic growth, experience which will serve me well in promoting American commerce and the merits of free and fair trade.

My passion for making the world a better place led to my involvement with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, serving as its

Chairman and as its Acting CEO. I believe that service has strengthened my ability to lead people to consensus and face tough challenges.

Austria was the first country to emerge from Soviet occupation after 1945, and today stands as an exemplar of democracy, freedom, and stability. Though a small country, Austria has contributed to peacekeeping missions in the Golan Heights, the Western Balkans, and Chad and have three staff officers in ISAF. As the inheritor of the Hapsburg monarchy's historic links to eastern and southeastern Europe, Austria sees a role for itself in helping countries in these regions integrate successfully into an enlarged European Union. Austria is an advocate for Serbia's EU and democratic path, as well as for Croatia in the EU – the Austrians support visa liberalization for Serbia and have been forward leaning on the EU candidacies of both countries. They were also among the first to recognize Kosovo. Furthermore, the current High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Valentin Inzko, is a senior Austrian diplomat.

The United States and Austria share both common values and a common perspective, including a commitment to reducing the threats posed by climate change and nuclear proliferation, a support for human rights and the rule of law, and a shared vision of peace and freedom for all. The people of Austria welcome President Obama's emphasis on building partnerships grounded in these shared values.

Austria is a solid friend of our country. We are bound together through myriad people-to-people contacts in business, the arts, scholarship, recreation and a host of other exchanges. We are partners in promoting global security and prosperity, not least during Austria's current term as a UN Security Council member. If confirmed, I pledge to use my experience to lead our U.S. Mission in advancing America's interests and, working with this Committee and Congress, forging even closer ties between the people of the United States and the people of Austria. I look forward to this.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.