

Statement of Gordon D. Sondland
Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to The European Union
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
June 21, 2018

Thank you, Senators Tillis and Wyden, for that kind introduction.

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Murphy, and distinguished Members of the Foreign Relations Committee:

Good afternoon. It's an honor to appear before you as the President's nominee to serve as the United States Ambassador to the European Union.

I'm grateful to President Trump for the faith and confidence he's placed in me, and to Secretary Pompeo for his support. And, I'm grateful to you for your consideration of my nomination.

Please allow me to introduce the members of my family, all here in attendance with me. First, my wife, Katy, without whose intelligence, kindness, patience, and wit, I might have achieved very little, and certainly not a place at this table. She's a formidable success in business, as well as in our home, and she's been an enduring source of strength – and humbling, smart advice – since the day I was fortunate to meet her nearly 30 years ago.

Sitting next to Katy are our two proudest accomplishments, our children Max and Lucy, both of whom are undergraduates at Duke, and both of whom departed challenging summer internships so they could be here by my side. I'm delighted they could be here today.

Absent today, but with me in spirit this past decade, are my parents, Gunther and Frieda Sondland. Having immigrated here in 1953 after so many years of extreme travail, they adopted America – and America adopted them – with a passion unrivaled by anyone I've since encountered.

Theirs was a story of intense personal sacrifice, unshakeable spirit and faith, hard work, good luck, and a deep commitment...devoted in equal parts to the United States and to each other. Having met and married in Berlin in 1938, Gunther and Frieda, and my sister Lucy, unlike so many of their less fortunate relatives were able to flee the scourge of Nazism. In 1939, Frieda and Lucy found safe haven in South America, while Gunther promptly volunteered to take up arms against the murderous, authoritarian regime from which they'd just escaped. First, with the French Foreign Legion in Africa, and later with the British Army in Burma. World War II came to a close, and two years later so too did Gunther and Frieda's eight-year separation, when they were reunited in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1947. Along with tens of thousands of other Jews, Gunther's surviving family had sought shelter in Shanghai. Soon, they and Gunther, Frieda, and

my sister Lucy found fortunate, permanent refuge in Seattle, Washington, on the Northwestern edge of our great country.

Here, they raised their two children, including me, the first of my family ever to claim natural-born citizenship in the United States. Here, they embarked on their own unique American dream, as proud American citizens, eventually starting and running a small successful dry-cleaning business for the next thirty years. Here, they labored, loved, made many friends and had a positive impact on their community. Here, they never ceased being grateful to the country that had given them hope, safety, and a new beginning. Gunther and Frieda fought hard for their American citizenship. They cherished it. They nurtured it. And, they marinated me and my sister Lucy in it. They bequeathed to us neither riches nor property, but something much more treasured: an abiding respect for industry, determination, and self-sufficiency; a deep love of God, family, and country – this country in particular; faith in the rule of law; and, finally, the certainty that self-governance is essential to happiness, prosperity and true liberty.

Denied so many of these for so long, Gunther and Frieda embraced these American values with fervor. If confirmed, everything I say and do will be in advancement of American interests, and these principles, first and foremost. They are certainly the principles that have guided me throughout my life. Most of them, of course, comprise the foundational Western principles that undergird the US/EU relationship that has endured since 1951.

Between us, the United States and the EU member nations wield the largest economic and military power in the world, dominate global trade, and lead the way in international political developments. It is why our unique relationship with Europe must only be strengthened and protected.

As President Trump said last year in his Warsaw speech establishing the preservation of the West as his primary foreign policy goal in Europe, “there is nothing like this community of nations. The world has never known anything like it. We must have the desire and the courage to preserve it in the face of those who would subvert and destroy it.”

As you know better than most, there are many challenges that confront us – trade, security, the migrant crisis, Brexit, and the disposition of the JCPOA very much at the forefront - but no one should doubt that the EU has an essential role in perpetuating our shared values of freedom, peace and prosperity across Europe, and around the world. To the benefit of our European friends, but also to a vast swath of the American people, the \$5.5 trillion in annual commerce we share is just one compelling testament to that.

Finally, while much has been said about the tensions that currently exist within the U.S.-EU partnership, it’s important to remember that historically, these ups and downs, these instances of public posturing, have been the norm. That’s just the nature of complicated relationships. While it won’t always be easy, our shared goals and values will triumph over our differences.

Beyond even my Frieda and Gunther education, I believe my professional experience of the last several decades has been instrumental in preparing me to lead the U.S. Mission at the EU, should you confirm my nomination.

I'm gratified to have launched a hospitality and real estate holding company, larger than I would have ever imagined, and sustaining several thousand individuals and their families from all walks of life and places.

I've also traveled extensively throughout the world, including across Europe, and have a knowledge and deep respect for European culture and politics. While I've been fortunate to visit the majority of the EU member countries, if confirmed, I will look forward to visiting them all.

I'm proud that the first language I spoke at home was German. If confirmed, I'll look forward to once again conversing with our friends throughout Europe in English, but also in German where spoken.

During the course of my life, I've had significant experience in policymaking, working with lawmakers from both parties, and at every level of government; in negotiating business deals across borders; and, in advising several large American companies with both domestic and international operations. I have always been comfortable working on a bipartisan basis. If confirmed, I can assure you that I will bring my life's experiences and skills to represent the United States at the European Union.

Thank you for your consideration and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.