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Remarks

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

At Swearing-In Ceremony for Ambassador to China Gary Locke

August 1, 2011

Treaty Room

Washington, D.C.

AMBASSADOR MARSHALL: Well, good afternoon. Good afternoon and welcome. It is my pleasure as the chief of protocol to welcome you to the State Department's Treaty Room for the swearing-in of Gary Locke to be the next Ambassador to the People's Republic of China. (Applause.) We are very privileged this afternoon to have the Secretary of State, the Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, officiating the ceremony, but we're also very happy to have the new ambassador's family with us today – his wife Mona, his lovely daughters Emily and Madeline, and his son Dylan. (Applause.)

We are also very happy to have join us the chargé from the Embassy of the Peoples Republic of China Republic of China and his wife Shi Ling. I would also like to acknowledge the ambassador of Kuwait and Mrs. Al Sabah; the ambassador of Japan Ambassador Fujisaki; the U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Ron Kirk; Acting Deputy Secretary of Commerce Dr. Rebecca Blank; former ambassador to China, the Honorable James Sasser; former NSC senior director and former ambassador to Namibia, the Honorable Jeffrey Bader; as well as many, many other current and former official ambassadors who are with us today.

Please join me in welcoming these honored guests. (Applause.) We will begin our ceremony this afternoon with remarks from the Secretary, who will then administer the oath of office to our new ambassador, then the signing of the appointment papers, followed with remarks by Ambassador Locke.

It is now my great pleasure and honor to introduce the Secretary of State.

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I am so delighted that this day has finally come. (Laughter.) And I am especially grateful to Gary's and Mona and their children and to all of you for your patience and persistence in ensuring that we would be here at the swearing-in of Gary Locke as our ambassador to the People's Republic of China. And it is an exciting and proud day for this Administration to be sending Gary and his wonderful family to China. I especially want to welcome the chargé and other members of the diplomatic community and so many friends from the Administration.

It goes pretty much without saying, but I will say it anyway, that our relationship with China is an extraordinarily important one that we think has a great substance to it and a great deal to what kind of future we will enjoy together in the 21st century. We are two complex, large nations with different histories and different political systems, but we know the importance of getting to know one another better, working together, solving problems together, and that is what we have been committed to doing.

And I am confident that we have the right person in Gary Locke to follow through on the commitment made by President Obama and President Hu Jintao to a positive, cooperative, and comprehensive relationship. Gary is going to Beijing at a time when there will be a lot of work for us to do to follow up on with the Strategic and Economic Dialogue, that there will be many difficult issues and challenges to face. But I know that Gary is more than ready to tackle that.

And there's hardly anyone we could be sending who has a reputation for working as hard as Gary Locke. I've known Gary a long time, and some of you have known him even longer, and you know that he has the reputation of being an extraordinarily hard worker. When he was a state representative, a Seattle newspaper once called him, and I quote, "The man who mistook his life for the legislature." (Laughter.) But that was before Mona. (Laughter.) Because I knew Gary before Mona. (Laughter.) And Mona, we're really glad that you're also going to Beijing. (Laughter.)

But think about the story that Gary takes with him, the son of an immigrant family from China who didn't learn to speak English until he started school, whose grandfather came to the United States from China in the 1890s and worked as a house servant in return for English lessons, whose father and mother worked in their mom-and-pop grocery seven days a week, 365 days a year, so their five children would have better lives. The Locke family understood what the American dream meant. They knew that it was an opportunity and not a guarantee, and that they had to do their part to be able to take advantage of what this country offered.

And Gary did – an honor student, an Eagle Scout, scholarships, all kinds of experiences at Yale and getting his law degree at Boston University, and then returning to Washington to become a state

representative and a county executive of King County and a two-time governor of Washington State, until recently, when he became our Secretary of Commerce.

And Gary's hard work didn't just help his family. He helped improve the lives of the people of Washington and of the United States. He was a great job creator in Washington during two national recessions. He has helped to lead our efforts to increase U.S. exports. He has brought the Census in on time and under budget, an unheard of accomplishment. He's brought comprehensive patent reform legislation closer to passage than it has in decades. And there's just so much else that can be pointed to in such a history of distinction in his many public service responsibilities. And now, he becomes the first Chinese American to represent the United States as ambassador in Beijing.

Now, as serious as he is, those of us who know him know that he can loosen up. (Laughter.) And I've heard the stories about singing the night that he won the governorship in front of casts of hundreds. I love the story about how he proposed to Mona with a banner attached to a little airplane that flew by that said, "Mona, I love you. Will you marry me?" And I think for his three children, they should know that he says all the time that, despite being a governor or a cabinet secretary, the most important job he's ever had is being your father. And I thank you for going with your father to Beijing. (Laughter.) Because I know it's not easy, but I believe you're going to have an amazing experience, and I know how much it will mean to the people of China to meet all of you as well.

Gary, I also know that you wish your late father, Jimmy, were standing here today, because you know how proud your family would be that you are, in a sense, going full circle on this journey that brought them here and now brings you to Beijing.

So if we're ready, I think we will administer the oath with Mona holding the Bible and you standing here. And please raise your right hand and – you've done this a few times before – (laughter) – and repeat after me.

(The Oath of Office is administered.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Congratulations, Ambassador. (Applause.)

AMBASSADOR LOCKE: This is to sign up for the payroll deduction? (Laughter.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: That all comes later. (Laughter.)

(The appointment papers were signed.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Excellent. (Applause.)

AMBASSADOR LOCKE: Well, thank you very much, Secretary Clinton, and Ambassador Marshall for presiding, and all of our honored guests – Ambassador Sasser, I see Carla Hills here, members of the Cabinet, Ron Kirk, and also Fred Hochberg of the Export-Import Bank, Chris Liu of the White House, and a lot of colleagues from the Department of Commerce, and friends and family from the West Coast. It's great to all have you here.

I'm really deeply humbled and honored to become the next United States ambassador to the People's Republic of China. And I'd like to thank President Obama, Secretary Clinton, the United States Senate, for their support, their confidence, and their trust in me. I also want recognize and thank Chargé d'Affaires Deng from the People's Republic of China, and many other friends and colleagues who are here today. With my family – my wife Mona and our children Emily, Dylan, and Madeline – we're excited to have this opportunity to serve the President and the people of the United States of America.

The United States and China have a profoundly important and complex diplomatic, economic, and strategic bilateral relationship – one with challenges, no question, but one which also holds great promise for extended cooperation and collaboration. I look forward to working with the Chinese Government to fulfill that promise, but more importantly, to build the positive, cooperative, and comprehensive relationship that President Obama and President Hu have agreed that our two countries should aspire to. We are already seeing examples of how this future can play out as our businesses and our governments collaborate to tackle some of the world's most pressing challenges. And I fully intend to support our ongoing bilateral and cooperative efforts on a host of critical international issues from climate change to the search for new, cleaner sources of energy, to stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons and materials, and to promote new areas of collaboration.

It's been my good fortune over the past decade to have had the opportunity to visit and meet with many Chinese Government officials and private sector executives in support of greater commercial cooperation and market access for U.S. goods and services. I look forward to continuing this dialogue, creating win-win scenarios for both of our countries, because American businesses and workers can help China meet its goals of modernization as well as improving the quality of life for the Chinese people, all at the same time creating jobs here at home for workers of America.

In those sensitive areas where America and China have differences or serious disagreement, I will work to keep the lines of communication open, to convey the Administration's positions clearly, and to engage with Chinese Government officials at the highest levels. At the same time, I hope to do more to communicate directly with the Chinese people to improve understanding between our two great nations.

I firmly believe improved U.S.-China cooperation is critically important, not just for our own two countries but for the world community. As a child of Chinese immigrants growing up in the State of Washington, having the opportunity to represent America, the land of my birth, and to represent American values was surely beyond any dream I could possibly have. And I can only imagine just how proud my dad, Jimmy, who passed away in January, would be for his son to be the first Chinese American to represent the United States in the land of his and my mother's birth. It may be cliché to say only in America, but in this case and for this role, it is both profoundly true and profoundly important. It is America and America's promise as a land of freedom, equality, and opportunity that I will represent when serving the President and the American people as the United States ambassador to China.

Let me just say that I can't end without acknowledging the great team and colleagues I've had at the Department of Commerce. It's been one of the best jobs I've ever had. And our folks at the Department

of Commerce, both the political and the career, have done amazing work. And I am just so proud of the opportunity to have worked with them.

And finally, my success in government is due to Mona. Secretary Clinton talks about the pre-Mona days. (Laughter.) Some of you here know that. I hope you all agree that the after-Mona days are much, much better. (Laughter and applause.) But my success in government is due to Mona, and she has been a constant, an incredible confidante, advisor, and has really kept me true and straight. In fact, I think that – I remember during the campaign for governor, so many people wrote us and said, “I’m voting for you only because of Mona.” (Laughter.) And I truly believe that for me to be successful in representing the United States in China, it will have to be a team collaborative effort with Mona. She has incredible instincts, incredible compass, and completely grounded in our family. And I thank you for your love and that support.

Our family is embarking on an adventure and a challenge, and we are eager to begin. Thank you very much for joining us today. (Applause.)

AMBASSADOR MARSHALL: On behalf of the ambassador and his family, we thank you for joining this ceremony, and we welcome you now to offer your own personal congratulations to the new ambassador in a receiving line in front of the podium. Again, congratulations, Ambassador Locke. (Applause.)

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