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Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Governor Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., To Be Ambassador to China

May 16, 2009

The President. Good morning, everybody. I am here to announce today the distinguished public servant I'm appointing as our Nation's new Ambassador to the People's Republic of China. I'm making this appointment mindful of its extraordinary significance. Given the breadth of issues at stake in our relationship with China, this ambassadorship is as important as any in the world, because the United States will best be able to deal effectively with global challenges in the 21st century by working in concert with China.

Now, there are few countries in the world with a past so rich or a future so full of possibility as China. With a vast population, a growing economy, and far-reaching influence, China will have a crucial role in confronting all the major challenges that face Asia and the world in the years ahead.

And that's why we're working with the Government of China to stem the financial crisis that's devastated economies around the world and help lay a foundation for sustainable growth and lasting prosperity on both sides of the Pacific. That's why I've spoken with Chinese President Hu Jintao about a number of regional threats, including the situations in North Korea and Pakistan. And that's why we will continue working together with China on a whole host of global challenges, ranging from energy and climate change to public health, from nuclear nonproliferation to terrorism and violent extremism.

I believe there's much to be gained from a closer, working relationship with China. But improved relations with China will require candor and open discussion about those issues where we don't always agree, such as human rights and democracy and free speech. And it will require that each of our nations play by the rules in open and honest competition.

And that's why this ambassadorship takes on such importance. I can think of no one better suited to take on this assignment than the Governor of the great State of Utah, Jon Huntsman.

When I asked Jon to accept this critical post, I knew it would require a sacrifice on the part of his family, and I want to thank Mary Kaye and all of their children for making this possible. I knew it would require a sacrifice from Jon, who will be giving up a seat as a popular Governor, having just been reelected to a second term. And I hope the good people of Utah will forgive me and understand how proud they should be of their Governor for his willingness to answer his Nation's call.

Finally, I knew that because Jon is not only a Republican, but a Republican who cochaired my opponent's campaign for the Presidency, this wouldn't be the easiest decision to explain to some members of his party.

But here's what I also know: I know that Jon is the kind of leader who always puts country ahead of party, is always willing to sacrifice on behalf of our Nation. That's what Jon has always done. Throughout his career, Jon has shown a willingness to move beyond the old ideologies and stale debates that all too often bring progress to a standstill. Time and again, he's brought people together across party lines to overcome our common challenges and to move our Nation forward.

What Jon brings to this post isn't just a steadfast commitment to advancing the interests of the American people; it's a lifetime of knowledge and experience that will help advance this important partnership. Jon brings to this post experience as a former Ambassador to Singapore, who's intimately familiar with many of the most pressing challenges confronting Asia. He brings experience both in the private sector and as Deputy United States Trade Representative to Asia and Africa, where he stood up for America's economic interests abroad. And Jon is well prepared to build a partnership that reflects a new understanding between our two countries because he's lived in Asia three times and is fluent in Mandarin Chinese.

That's the kind of ambassador we need in China, an ambassador who has a respect for China's proud traditions, who understands what it will take to make America more competitive in the 21st century, and who will be an unstinting advocate for America's interests and ideals. With Jon Huntsman representing the United States in China, I'm confident that we will launch a new era of partnership between our two nations that will advance our shared dreams of opportunity and security in America, in Asia, and around the world.

So I'm extraordinarily pleased to announce that Jon Huntsman will be our Ambassador to China, and I can think of no more important assignment than creating the kinds of bridges between our two countries that will determine the well-being not just of Americans and Chinese, but also the future of the world.

So, with that, I'd like to have Jon say a few words. Thank you, Jon.

Gov. Huntsman. Thanks, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Kaye, wife of Gov. Huntsman, and their children, Mary Anne, Abigail, Elizabeth, Jon III, William, Gracie Mei and Asha; and Sen. John McCain of Arizona, 2008 Republican Presidential candidate. The Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Gov. Huntsman.

Categories: Appointments and Nominations : China, U.S. Ambassador, remarks.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Hu Jintao; Huntsman, Abigail; Huntsman, Asha; Huntsman, Elizabeth; Huntsman, Gracie Mei; Huntsman, Jon M., Jr.; Huntsman, Jon, III; Huntsman, Mary Anne; Huntsman, Mary Kaye; Huntsman, William; McCain, John.

Subjects: Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Nonproliferation efforts; China : Democracy and human rights issues; China : Economic growth and development; China : President; China : Relations with U.S.; China : U.S. Ambassador-designate; Commerce, international : Global financial markets :: Stabilization efforts; Commerce, international : Global financial markets :: Unrest; Environment : Climate change; Terrorism : Global threat; Utah : Governor.

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