



# The American Hungarian Federation

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## **AMERICAN HUNGARIAN FEDERATION'S STATEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH THE UPCOMING SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE CONFIRMATION HEARINGS OF AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE COLLEEN BRADLEY BELL**

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Washington, D.C. – Today, the American Hungarian Federation (Federation) issued the following statement regarding the upcoming confirmation hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee of Ambassador-Designate Colleen Bradley Bell to be ambassador to Hungary:

Hungary is a committed NATO member and strong U.S. ally. Its support for United States foreign policy goals has been rooted strongly in the popular imagination. This reservoir of popular support of the United States was a precious commodity that gave U.S. foreign policy a competitive advantage in the Central and Eastern European region during the Cold War and the years that have followed. Sadly, this popular support has been at risk of erosion in Hungary in recent years, mainly due to three developments:

First, there is a perception among a growing number of Hungarians of a lack of American evenhandedness that favors one side of the political spectrum over the current ruling center-right party.

Second, there is a constant barrage of questionable allegations often inspired by opposition parties and their allies in the West singling out Hungary for criticism by questioning Hungarians' commitment to democracy and democratic norms.

Third, many Hungarians believe that a double standard has been at play relative to the protection of minority rights in the region. For example, Hungary, without clear evidence, has been unfairly accused of being insensitive to minority rights. By sharp contrast, there are actual laws, policies and practices that discriminate specifically against Hungarian minorities, Roma and Jews living in countries neighboring Hungary that go unchallenged. One neighboring country passed a discriminatory language Law in 2009 and changed its dual citizenship laws to target the Hungarian minority specifically. Thousands of church and synagogue properties seized by the Communist regime in another neighboring country remain to be returned to their rightful owners. Yet Hungary, which has taken affirmative steps to protect minorities, is primarily singled out for criticism.

"The Federation welcomes the nomination of Ambassador-Designate Bell. We trust that she will take concrete steps to change the perception of a lack of evenhandedness and a double standard in the treatment of Hungary which, if not adequately addressed, may undermine both U.S. diplomatic and strategic interests in Hungary and the region," said Federation president Frank Koszorus, Jr.

The Federation, founded in 1906, is an independent, non-partisan entity representing a broad cross-section of the Hungarian American community. It supports good American/Hungarian relations and democracy, human and minority rights, and the rule of law in Central and Eastern Europe.

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