Branstad to push for positive US-China ties

2017-05-03

By CHEN WEIHUA in Washington |   
 chinadaily.com.cn |  
 Updated: 2017-05-03 03:44

Terry Branstad, the nominee for US ambassador to China, said he hopes to use his unique relationships with Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump to positively influence US-China relations.  
Branstad made the remarks on Tuesday morning during his confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.  
His wife Christine Johnson and his two sons, Eric and Marcus, sat behind him. Branstad has two sons, one daughter and seven grandchildren.  
"If confirmed, I hope to use my unique position as an ‘old friend' of President Xi and a trusted confidant of President Trump to positively influence the US-China relationship," he said.  
Branstad, who is serving his sixth term as Iowa governor and is the longest-serving governor in US history, described his relationship with Xi which goes back to 1985. Branstad was then serving his first term and met Xi, who was leading an agriculture delegation from Hebei province, Iowa's sister province.  
"A connection was made and a friendship was founded. To this day, President Xi still speaks fondly of Iowa and the hospitality he enjoyed there so many years ago," said Branstad.  
When Xi visited the US in February of 2012 as China's vice-president, he went to Iowa to visit the people who hosted him in 1985, people he referred to as "old friends", including Branstad.  
Branstad told lawmakers on Tuesday that as Iowa governor, he saw first-hand the importance of a positive and healthy trade relationship between the two countries, adding that one out of every two rows of Iowa soybeans is sent to China, as well as $33.5 million in pork in 2016.  
He said as ambassador, he will continue the work he started as governor to open up the Chinese markets to American businesses of all sorts. "This will be good for the American people as it will create more jobs, and good for the Chinese people as they will have more access to the best-made products this world has to offer," he said.  
"In keeping with the president's mission, I am also committed to making sure that the trade relationship between the United States and China puts the American worker first," he said.  
He described US-China relations as "multi-faceted," citing last month's meeting between Xi and Trump in Mar-a-Lago, Florida, where they agreed to cooperate more closely on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.  
Serious concerns about China-US relations, such as a potential tit-for-tat trade war, have been dramatically reduced since Branstad first accepted Trump's nomination for the post on December 8.  
Trump has talked positively of Xi after their meeting in Florida. He has also accepted Xi's invitation to visit China. Last month, a US Treasury Department report found that China is not manipulating its currency.  
The Chinese government reacted favorably to Branstad's nomination. Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said in December that "Mr Branstad is an old friend of the Chinese people, and we welcome his greater contribution to the development of China-US relations."  
Branstad told lawmakers on Tuesday that as governor, he travels to all 99 counties in Iowa every year. "As ambassador, I hope to continue this tradition by visiting every province in China," he said.  
"With a country as large and expansive as China, I know there is much life and activity outside of Beijing. I look forward to connecting with the Chinese people and continuing the vibrant exchange of culture and ideas that we began in 1983," he said.  
Branstad signed the Iowa sister-state agreement with Hebei in 1983. The following year, he led a 50-person Iowa delegation to the northern China province. Last year he made his sixth trade mission to China.  
"Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that a boy from a small farm in Leland, Iowa, would one day have the opportunity to become, with your consent, the ambassador to one of the world's most influential countries and one of America's largest trading partners," the 70-year-old Republican politician told lawmakers in the Tuesday hearing, which lasted less than two hours.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201705/03/WS59bb96d9a310d4d9ab7eb1f7.html