

New US ambassador to Luxembourg Randy Evans talks about the uniqueness of the grand duchy, Nato, space, Brexit and EU-US trade. And, of course, about Donald Trump.

INTERVIEW Randy Evans

“It was a no-brainer”

WORDS Duncan Roberts PHOTOS Matic Zorman

Several people were perhaps surprised when Georgia lawyer and influential Republican Randy Evans asked to be posted to Luxembourg upon being told he would get an ambassadorship. But not the president of the United States. “I don’t think president Trump is ever surprised by anything,” says the genial Evans. “I think many of my colleagues were surprised because everybody has a different vision about what you’d like to do next.”

DUNCAN ROBERTS So, why did you choose Luxembourg?

RANDY EVANS When I looked at the people, the place, the beauty, it was a no-brainer. It embodied the kind of place I want to live in and the community I would want to be a part of. Luxembourg has a baseline of in-

tellect and knowledge and an openness to the possibility that ideas other than your own might be the right answer. And you have a genuine curiosity.

How have you been welcomed by the grand duke and the government ministers with whom you have had meetings?

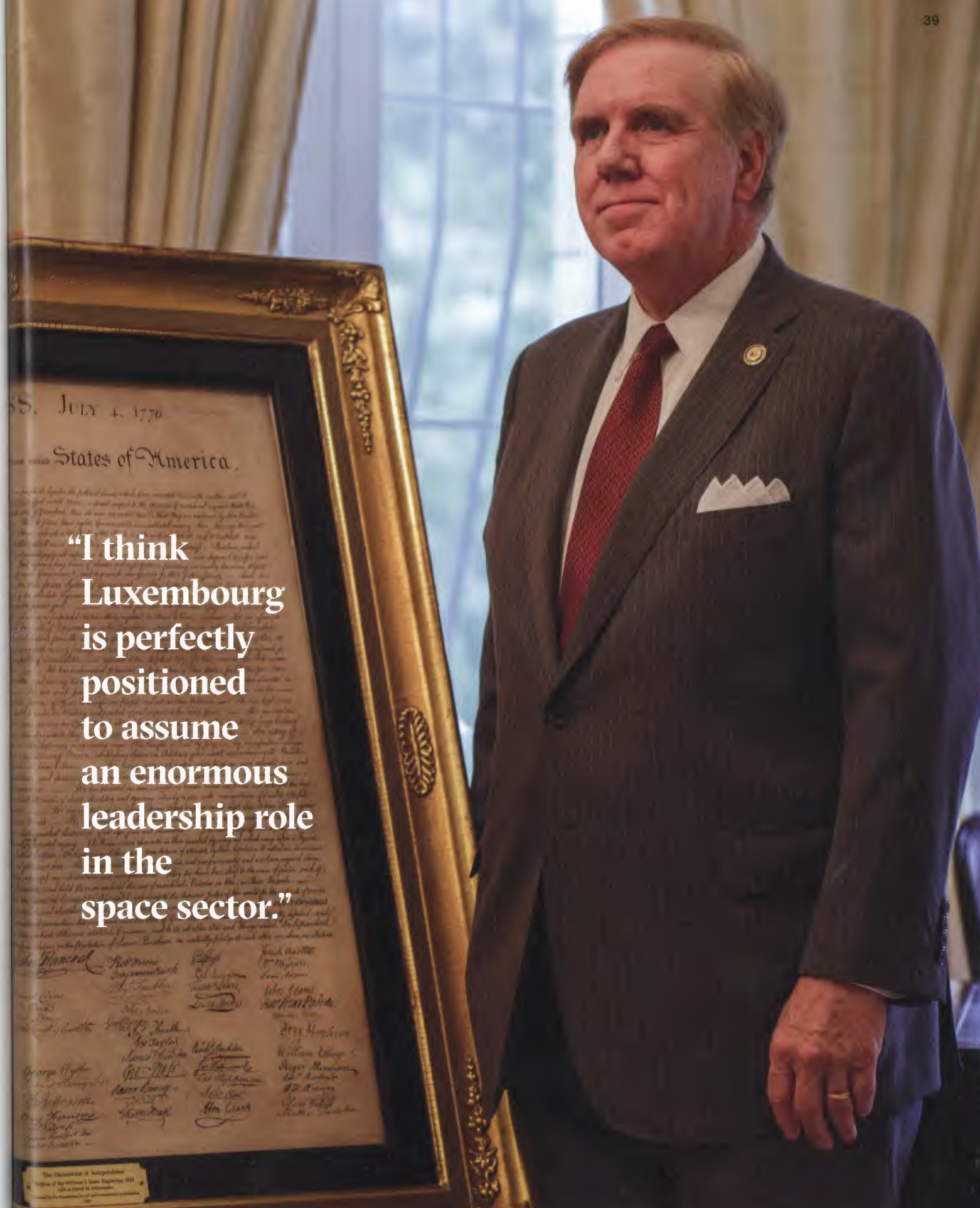
The grand duke is a phenomenal person. I was really taken by how articulate and precise he was on issues, as well as his genuine warmth. He is an enormous asset for the country.

Meeting the ministers, everybody has a passion about them... not about what’s good for a political party or an individual political career, but what’s good for the country. Wherever you go, there’s some-

thing refreshing about talking to people who are well informed, who keep up with the issues, who know what they are and are not worried about who you are.

What will be the main topics and challenges you are keen to tackle over the next couple of years?

For the president, the Wales commitment [the guideline agreed in 2014 by Nato member countries to move towards 2% of GDP spending on defence within a decade] is a big issue. Luxembourg has some pretty unique challenges because of the size of their GDP and the size of their population and their armed forces. I think they’re working hard to move in the right direction. I get that sense across the board that if you make a commitment you’re going to honour →



“I think Luxembourg is perfectly positioned to assume an enormous leadership role in the space sector.”

that commitment. How you go about honoring that commitment varies for every single country. It can be met with a variety of resources... everything from rescue operations to communications satellites. It doesn't always have to be lethal force.

I have a personal interest in space. I think Luxembourg is perfectly positioned to assume an enormous leadership role in the space sector. I hope to be helpful as they pursue their future in space. Luxembourg has somehow always anticipated that next moment. Whether it was moving to steel by virtue of the industrial revolution or moving to finance and technology and now to space. It's a pretty unique skill set to look into the future and see your place.

No country can substitute for the stability of the US financial markets, and you can't go into space without enormous financial backing. On the other hand, we know that Luxembourg is the holder of significant investment assets that are also tailor-made for the same exploration. Put those two together, with a little bit of guidance and leadership, and you're making the kind of progress that we have to make over the future of our planet.

You have written a book, "Climate Change and Insurance". Can you tell us a bit about what it posits?

We know that the climate is changing—it's been changing for four and a half billion years—and it will continue to change. We know there are a myriad of causes that lead to climate change—everything from plate tectonics to the distance of the moon to the Earth to internal core cooling. The operative question is, how can we affect the rate of change, and does it result in unintended consequences? The part where I come down on is, to me there are good reasons why we need to take better care of our planet regardless of getting caught up in the climate change debate.

There are unique solutions available, and I discussed these with [*minister for the environment*] Carole Dieschbourg. She really knows her stuff. Imagine if there is an insurance policy that states if you suffer property loss, you rebuild with green materials. Or a municipality with a fleet of automobiles that replaces its entire fleet over the course of five years. You decide that every time a vehicle needs replacing, it does so with a green vehicle.

That way you have a process in place that leads to the same destination but doesn't involve the political capital and benefits consumers because they're getting better products. That way you can take government policy, implement it through private commercial law with consumer backing and achieve a climate goal. The book deals with

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directors' and officers' liability insurance to indemnity insurance and property insurance. All of these can be used as a way to facilitate a much faster pace than to get into the gridlock, which is where we sometimes end up. We have to find creative solutions to be good stewards of the planet.

You have stated that you are fascinated with Brexit. What do you make of the current state of negotiations? What impact would a no-deal outcome have on the United States' relationship with the UK and with the EU?

Just when we think we understand it, we realise we don't understand it. When we think we have a target, we realise the target has changed. Somehow, it seems it may even defy time itself. I think there will be lots of ebbs and flows between now and the deadline. Where it ends up is anybody's guess. It's a bit like when people ask me what's going to happen in the upcoming US [midterm] elections. I say, "anybody who tells you they know what's going to happen is delusional".

You have a unique situation where the decision of a nation has been made,

the time for implementation has come, nobody can figure out exactly how to do that and nobody anticipated the literally millions of permeations that exist on everything from how to deal with Ireland, how to deal with immigration to how to deal with banking.

My expectation is that eventually, as with all things, as you get towards the end, things start to take care of themselves. Problems start to resolve themselves by virtue of the dynamics of the moment.

We are a staunch ally of the EU and the United Kingdom. The president has been pretty unequivocal on that. It doesn't make it any more predictable though. We know where we will end up. Where *their* relation ends up is something that we cannot control, nor are we trying.

The July meeting between Jean-Claude Juncker and Donald Trump on EU-US trade seemed to be positive. How do you view the trade relationship developing in light of that meeting?

President Trump is the quintessential deal maker, which means that he considers everything on the table. You're best to meas-

→ The new US ambassador says Luxembourg has a baseline of intellect and knowledge, openness and genuine curiosity



↑ **RANDY EVANS**

A former partner in law firm Dentons (a role he has resigned upon taking up his diplomatic appointment), Randy Evans has worked as advisor to several Republic politicians, including former House of Representatives speaker Newt Gingrich. He also served as general counsel to the Republican Party of Georgia and was a member of the Republican National Committee. Evans was nominated to the post of US ambassador to Luxembourg by president Donald Trump in September 2017, but his confirmation by the senate was delayed and the nomination expired at the end of the year. He was renominated in January and finally confirmed by the senate in May.

ure him by the deal that's left at the end of the day, not the beginning. If I were to be so bold as to attribute a mantra to president Trump on trade, it would be "insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting the same result". He's not going to do the same thing and by definition that means it will be different. Things that are different scare people, but many times, different is the solution we need.

If you're a really good lawyer and the other side is a really good lawyer, generally the best you're going to end up with is neither side is going to get all they want, but each side will get enough to make a deal. I think that's where all of these trade issues will end up.

Is there not a fear in the US that the imposition of tariffs will bring the EU and China and Japan closer together?

Well no, I think that is the president rearranging the board. The president's goal is never to walk into a room and rearrange the pieces of the board. It is to walk into the room and knock the table over and pick up the pieces and put together a deal that actually makes sense.

What happens, if you're not careful over decades, is that institutional practices become so rigid that you can never get to a fair deal. When that happens, really the only solution is to say we're going to start over. We're going to put together a deal that breaks fundamental assumptions. If that's where we end up at the end of four years or eight years, at that point reality will take over from all the accusations.

The president has developed some really good relationships among world leaders because they don't have to second guess what he means. I will be the first to agree there will be differences of opinion along the way, but I think we will end up in a pretty good place. I mean, who would have expected he would end up getting closer to a deal with Mexico than with Canada on Nafta after saying "you're going to pay for the wall". He does things differently. ×