

**Incontro con l'Ambasciatore degli Stati Uniti d'America in Italia  
Università di Sassari  
11 maggio 2016, Aula Magna**

**Opening speech – Rector Massimo Carpinelli**

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning,

Thank you all so much for being here.

I am so pleased to be with you today and to have the chance to introduce our guest speaker, the Honourable John Phillips, Ambassador of the United States of America to Italy.

On behalf of all professors, students and staff of the University of Sassari, let me welcome you to Sardinia.

Ambassador Phillips is in his first official visit to Sardinia for a discussion on an exceptionally topical subject: the U.S. Presidential Elections. The spotlight of world media is pointed directly on them.

Ambassador Phillips was appointed by President Obama in 2013 and has since shown exceptional dedication to the relationships between the United States and our Country.

Being an alumnus of the University of Notre Dame and the Berkeley Law School, Ambassador Phillips started and directed the Center for Law in the Public Interest in Los Angeles for 17 years.

During that time, the Centre was a major force in the field of environmental and civil rights cases; consumer protection and corporate fraud and accountability cases.

Moreover, Ambassador Phillips played a significant role in the creation of the U.S. government's whistleblower reward program, designed to encourage private citizens to expose and stop any kind of fraud against the government.

On a different note, Ambassador Phillips has a long-standing and deep knowledge of Italy: he knows how in Italy even small realities may conceal a great past and a bursting vitality; and we are confident that he will extend his appreciation of Italy's great diversity and beauty, also to our University, our city and our region.

For the University of Sassari, this event has a tremendous value – both an educational and a symbolic value.

On an educational level, scholars and students will have the opportunity to understand a complex political process like the U.S. Presidential Primary Elections and General Elections, thanks to the Ambassador's expert point of view.

On a symbolic level, for many scholars and students of this University, this meeting is an encouragement to pursue collaborations with the United States and the U.S. Diplomatic Mission to Italy.

Our researchers and professors are engaged in comparative studies on the evolution of U.S. politics, economy, culture and society. There is a great number of ongoing collaborations with U.S. scholars in different hard science fields. Since 2006, the year when the Visiting Professor Program was launched, we have hosted 58 scholars coming from the U.S.

In the last three years, 29 study grants were funded to support mobility to the United States, as part of ULISSE, a program developed by the University of Sassari to promote non-EU study exchange.

Over the years, the University of Sassari has collaborated with the U.S. Embassy for the organization of meetings with experts to talk about U.S. elections, meetings involving esteemed scholars working overseas, information sessions on the prestigious Fulbright academic exchange program.

Before giving the floor to the Ambassador, I wish to thank all the authorities attending this meeting, and the colleagues and students who have showed their interest in participating in this conference. Some of them are here today, others will follow us on-line on our streaming channel, since - I am afraid - applications have exceeded the number of seats available in this room.

In particular, I thank the colleagues of the Department of Political science, Communication science and Information Engineering who have organized this meeting.

Without further ado, please join me in welcoming the Honourable Ambassador of the United States to Italy, John Phillips.