

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 10, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush:

Your FY2007 budget eliminates the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, which is a unique source of high-quality, policy-relevant data on the economic well-being of American families. We urge you not to discontinue this valuable survey, which tracks the same families over time and allows researchers to examine the impact of a wide variety of government programs.

The SIPP is the only large-scale survey that collects data on cash and noncash income, taxes, assets, liabilities, and participation in government transfer programs, which allows the government to evaluate the effectiveness of federal, state, and local programs. The United States currently has no other survey that provides longitudinal data on this range of topics with a sample large enough to do meaningful policy analysis.

The survey allows us to understand families' transitions in and out of government programs and in and out of employment. These features have made the SIPP the preeminent survey for analyzing the effects of social policy from the Earned Income Tax Credit to the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act welfare reform legislation.

Without access to the SIPP's consistent time-series data, we will have to wait years, if not decades, to understand the implications of current policy decisions. In short, this survey helps Congress to make good policy decisions and to be good stewards of American tax dollars.

By eliminating the SIPP, the U.S. would not only abandon significant investments by government and private researchers but we would also lose the ability to examine family outcomes over time. The proposed FY2007 budget includes funds for a far smaller data program, which would be less useful than the SIPP because it would be more limited and not longitudinal. Any new survey will not be able to tell us how tomorrow's outcomes compare with today's or those of two decades ago because the new survey will be inconsistent with prior data.

The research, advocacy, and journalism communities share the concern that we need access to this high quality data on the living standards of our citizens. SIPP data has been used in thousands of published papers and reports analyzing labor-market dynamics and the impact of U.S. social policy. Thousands of government, academic, and policy researchers rely on the survey, as does Congress. The Government Accountability Office, Congressional Research

Service, Congressional Budget Office, and the Census itself have used SIPP data extensively to conduct critical research for Congress.

We urge you to work with us to restore full funding to this important survey and not eliminate the leading source of comprehensive data on the economic well-being of Americans.

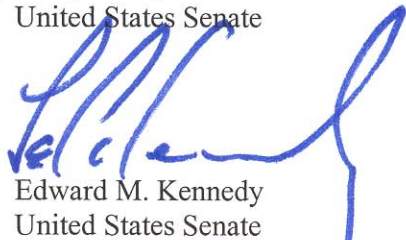
Sincerely,

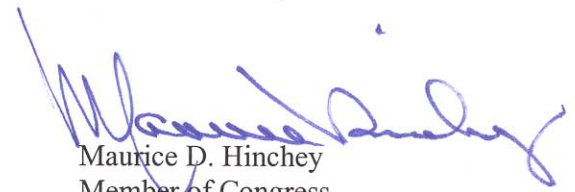

Jack Reed
United States Senate



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress


Harry Reid
United States Senate

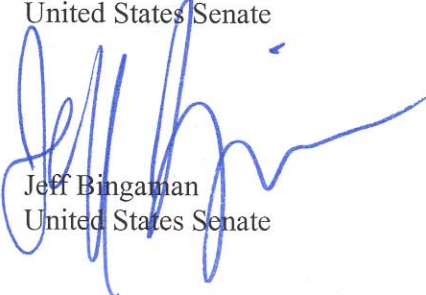

Nancy Pelosi
Member of Congress



Edward M. Kennedy
United States Senate


Maurice D. Hinchey
Member of Congress


Paul S. Sarbanes
United States Senate


Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress


Jeff Bingaman
United States Senate


Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress


Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senate

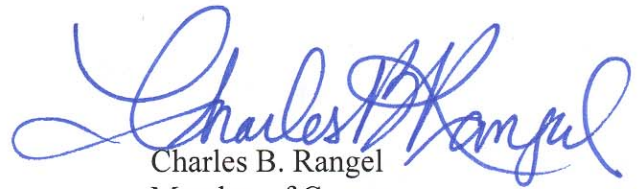

Christopher Shays
Member of Congress


Richard Durbin
United States Senate


José E. Serrano
Member of Congress



Barbara Boxer
United States Senate



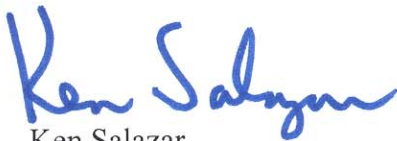
Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress



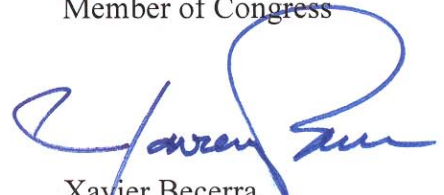
John D. Rockefeller, IV
United States Senate



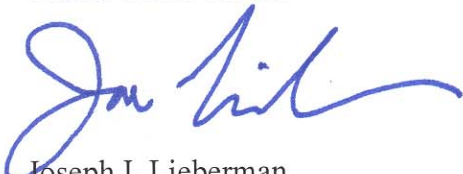
Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



Ken Salazar
United States Senate



Xavier Becerra
Member of Congress



Joseph I. Lieberman
United States Senate



George Miller
Member of Congress



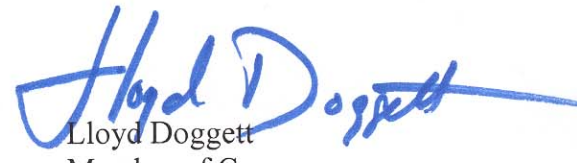
Maria Cantwell
United States Senate



William "Lacy" Clay, Jr.
Member of Congress



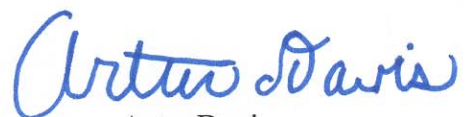
Tim Johnson
United States Senate



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress




Tom Harkin
United States Senate



Artur Davis
Member of Congress



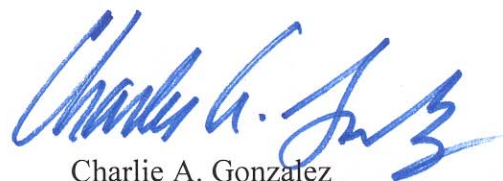
Ron Wyden
United States Senate



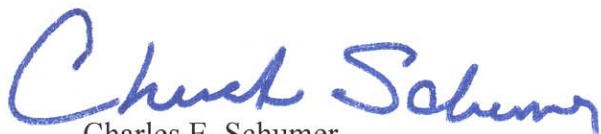
Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



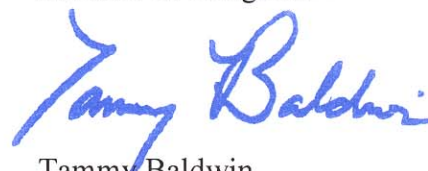
Max Baucus
United States Senate



Charlie A. Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senate



Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress



Russell D. Feingold
United States Senate



Julia Carson
Member of Congress



Barack Obama
United States Senate



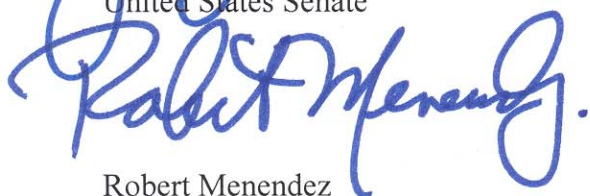
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



James M. Jeffords
United States Senate



John Olver
Member of Congress



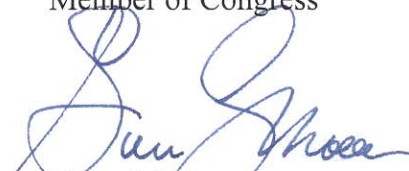
Robert Menendez
United States Senate



Anthony D. Weiner
Member of Congress



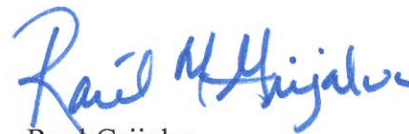
Frank R. Lautenberg
United States Senate



Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



Blanche L. Lincoln
United States Senate



Raul Grijalva
Member of Congress

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Hillary Rodham Clinton
United States Senate

Grace J. Napolitano

Grace Napolitano
Member of Congress

John F. Kerry

John F. Kerry
United States Senate

~~Gregory W. Meeks~~

~~Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress~~

Carl Levin

Carl Levin
United States Senate

Barbara Lee

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Chris Dodd

Christopher J. Dodd
United States Senate

Rosa L. DeLauro

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

Patty Murray

Patty Murray
United States Senate

Patrick J. Kennedy

Patrick Kennedy
Member of Congress

Herb Kohl

Herb Kohl
United States Senate

Peter DeFazio

Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress

Sander Levin

Sander Levin
Member of Congress

Hilda K. Solis

Hilda Solis
Member of Congress

Chaka Fattah

Chaka Fattah
Member of Congress

Tom Allen

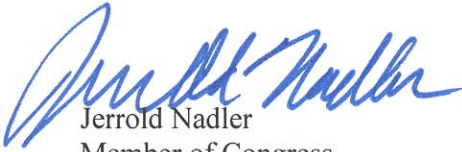
Tom Allen
Member of Congress



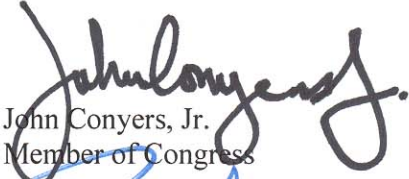
Major Owens
Member of Congress



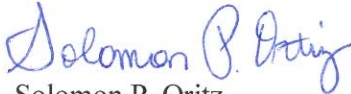
Sherrod Brown
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress



Solomon P. Ortiz
Member of Congress



Pete Fortney Stark
Member of Congress



Henry Waxman
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



James McGovern
Member of Congress

Cc: Carlos M. Gutierrez, Secretary of Commerce
Charles Kincannon, Director of the Census Bureau