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U.S. House of Representatives**COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

335 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

<http://veterans.house.gov>

November 14, 2005

Honorable Steve Buyer
 Chairman
 Committee on Veterans' Affairs
 U.S. House of Representatives
 Washington, DC 20215

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We understand you have recently announced your decision to discontinue the long-standing annual joint hearings of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees to receive and review the legislative priorities of national veterans' and military service organizations. While it is not clear how you could unilaterally abolish this series of joint hearings with the Senate, you are certainly within your purview to withdraw yourself from such hearings and discourage your majority colleagues from participation in the joint forums. We would advise against such action, but such a decision is clearly your prerogative.

We, however, wish to continue with our participation in the joint hearings and believe the information exchange that occurs in these forums is of great importance. These hearings, Mr. Chairman, provide more than just feedback from the field and rank-and-file members of the organizations, they are often the wellspring of ideas that yield improvements to the broad array of services that assist veterans nationwide. We have often learned from the ideas presented in such forums and acted in a bipartisan manner to introduce appropriate legislation to remedy problems or create a more effective VA.

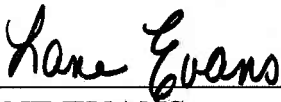
The joint hearings permit representatives of veterans groups to commend and challenge their lawmakers on the successes and failures of Congress and of the Administration with regard to matters important to veterans and their families. The general discourse occurs in an open and public forum and is not subject to filtering of ideas or of responses. This type of open communication, particularly with a constituency as deserving and as vital as the veteran community, must continue

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to remain the hallmark of our democracy. We will not participate in the erosion of this critical process.

Mr. Chairman, we respectfully request that you reconsider your action – veterans will be better served if all four corners have the opportunity to participate in the joint hearings. In lieu of a positive response to this recommendation, it will be our intention to preserve the current joint legislative presentations through the development of an alternative but similar forum.

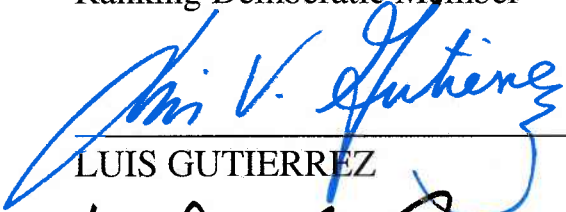
Sincerely,



LANE EVANS
Ranking Democratic Member



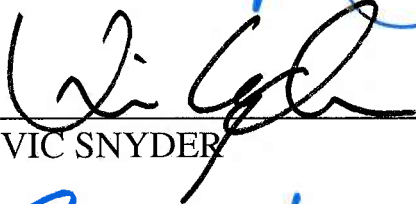
BOB FILNER



LUIS GUTIERREZ



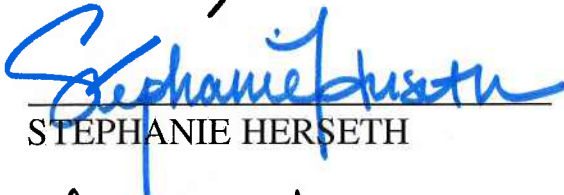
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MIKE MICHAUD



STEPHANIE HERSETH



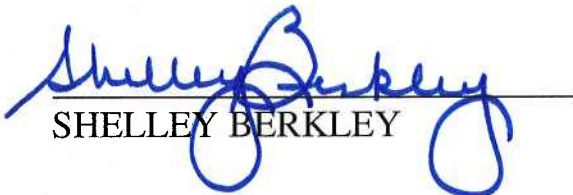
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