

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 11, 2006

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H232 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives
H204 United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker and Ms. Democratic Leader:

If Congress does not act soon, the Medicare sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula will cut payments to physicians and health care professionals by almost 5%, effective January 1, 2007. When added to the additional cuts required under current law through 2015, physician payments will be reduced by a total of 37% even as liability insurance, fuel, and other costs escalate more rapidly than inflation and the need to invest in health information technology to improve care quality is increasingly important.

The undersigned Members respectfully urge you to ensure these impending cuts are addressed before Congress adjourns in October. It takes some period of time for CMS to implement a change in the physician fee schedule update and we must avoid the needless and expensive upheaval required to retroactively fix physician payments, as we did this year. At a minimum, we must provide a modest increase for physicians as they received a zero increase this year and are being encouraged to adopt health information technology.

Physicians are the foundation of our nation's health care system. A stable and predictable payment law for physician service delivery is critical to preserving a patient centered care system. Currently, the average 2006 Medicare physician payment rates are about the same as they were in 2001. If the 2007 cut is imposed, then Medicare physician payment rates since 2001 will have fallen 20% below the government's conservative measure of inflation for medical practice costs.

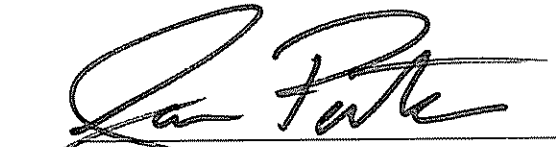
These projected payment cuts will destabilize the Medicare program and put all patients' access to health care at risk. The lack of predictability in Medicare payments encourages older physicians with older patients to retire early and discourages young doctors from entering specialties that treat predominately Medicare patients. The Congressionally-created Council on Graduate Medical Education is predicting a shortage of 85,000 physicians by 2020. Multi-year cuts in Medicare will likely exacerbate this shortage. Additionally, the five-year review of relative value units (RVUs) makes important strides in adjusting for long-standing payment inequities but the budget neutrality requirement, especially in the absence of an increase in payment, will further cut many physicians' reimbursement. The lack of an overall increase in physician payments undermines the keystone of Medicare: the widespread participation by top notch physicians.

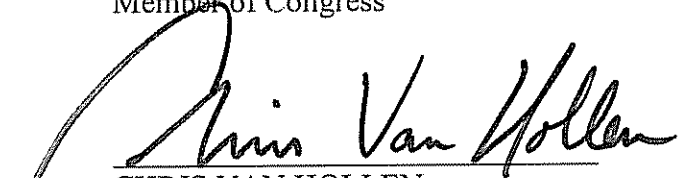
To preserve Medicare patients' access to care, we must act immediately to avert these cuts to Medicare physician payments. We ask that you work quickly with the Committee on Ways and Means, the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and the undersigned to address this critical issue. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.


Sincerely,



NANCY L. JOHNSON
Member of Congress



BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
Member of Congress


JON C. BORTER
Member of Congress



CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
Member of Congress



BETTY MCCOLLUM
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PETE SESSIONS
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JAMES A. LEACH
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JIM GERLACH
Member of Congress


TIM RYAN
Member of Congress

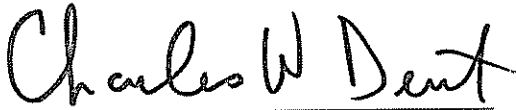

JIM MATHESON
Member of Congress



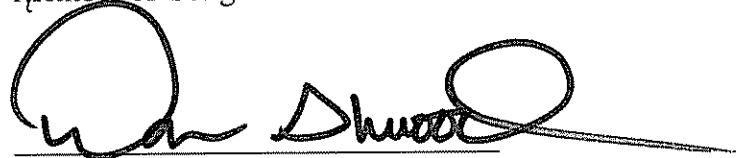
CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress



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DON SHERWOOD
Member of Congress



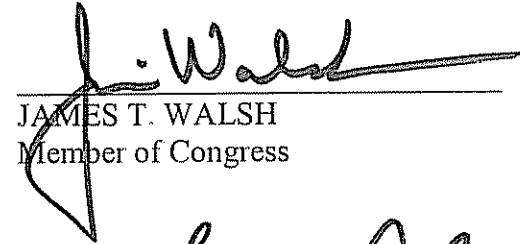
BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress



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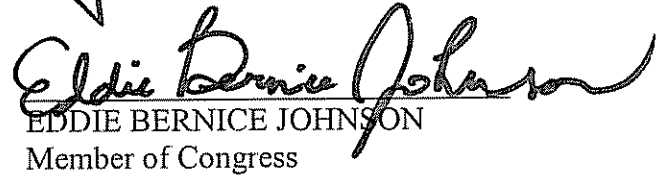
FRED UPTON
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GREG WALDEN
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EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON
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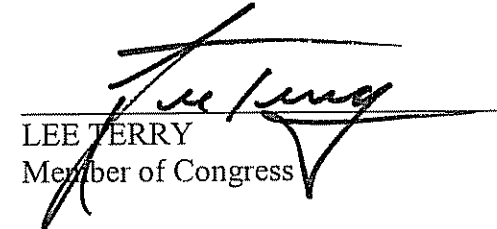
JOHN E. SWEENEY
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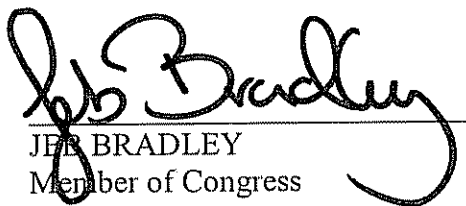
K. MICHAEL CONAWAY
Member of Congress



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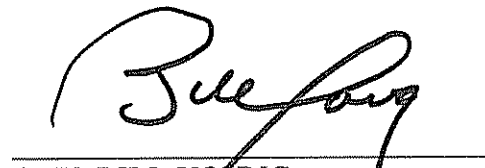


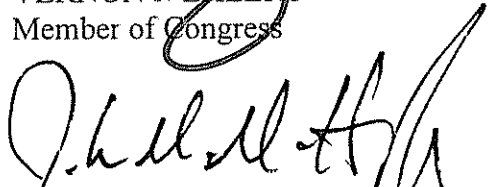
JEB BRADLEY
Member of Congress



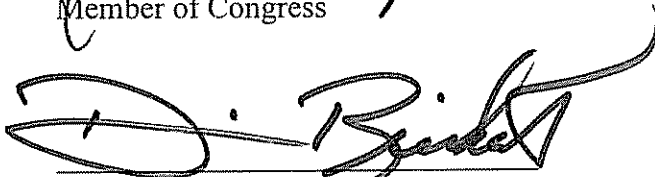
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BOB BEAUPREZ
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Thelma Drake

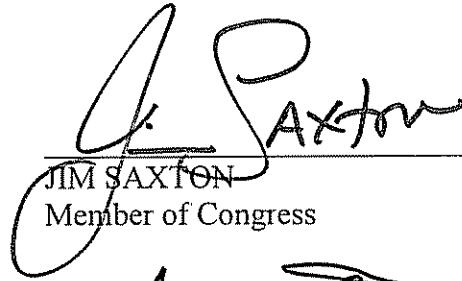
THELMA D. DRAKE
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Joe Wilson

JOE WILSON
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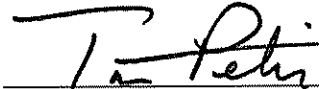
MAURICE D. HINCHEY
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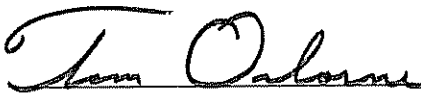
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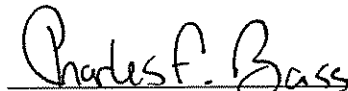
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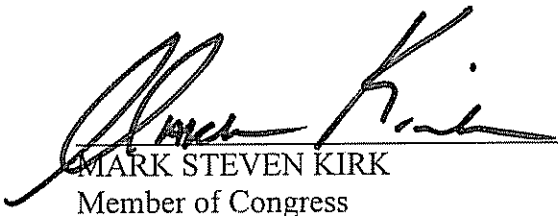
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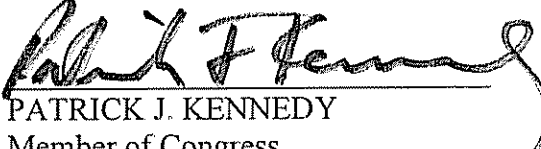
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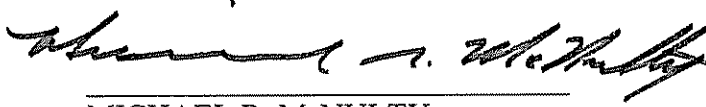

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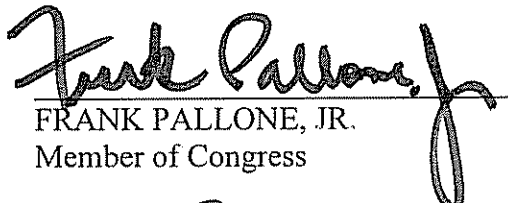

DENNIS MOORE
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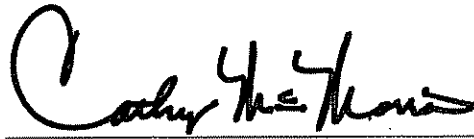

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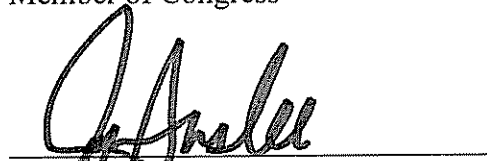

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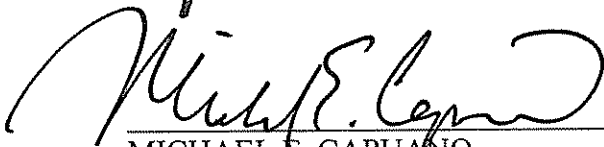

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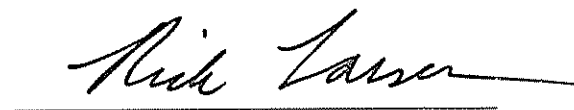

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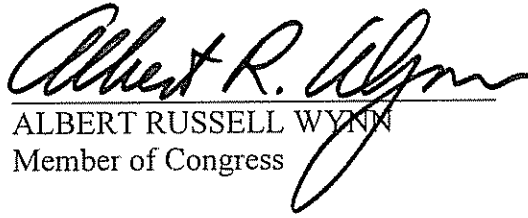

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TED STRICKLAND
Member of Congress

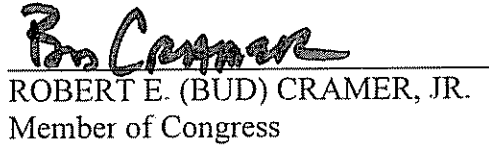

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Member of Congress

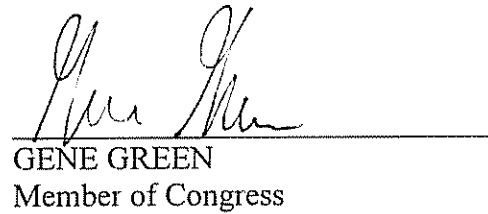

SUSAN A. DAVIS
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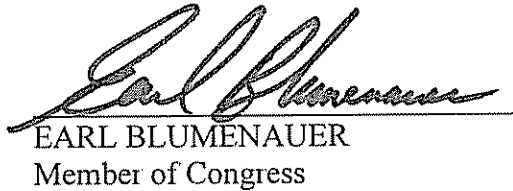

ROBERT WEXLER
Member of Congress

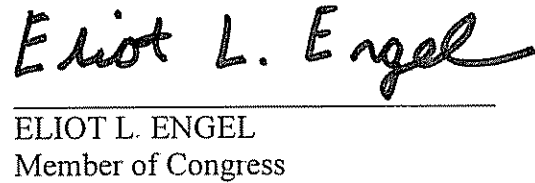

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Member of Congress


RUSS CARNAHAN
Member of Congress


ROBERT E. (BUD) CRAMER, JR.
Member of Congress

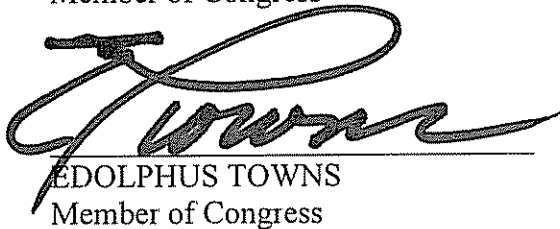

GENE GREEN
Member of Congress

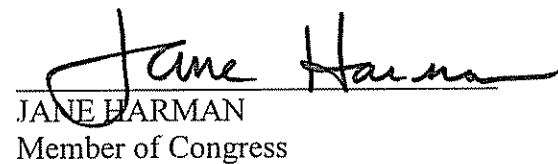

EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress

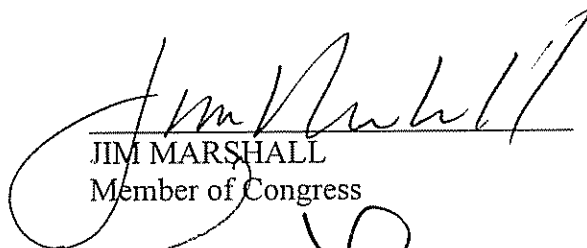

ELIOT L. ENGEL
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DENNIS A. CARDOZA
Member of Congress

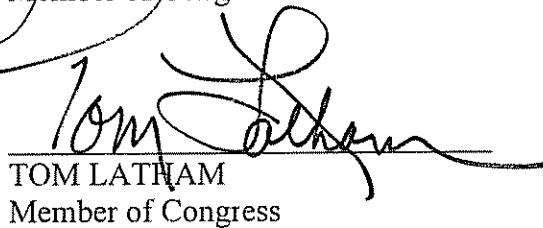

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
Member of Congress

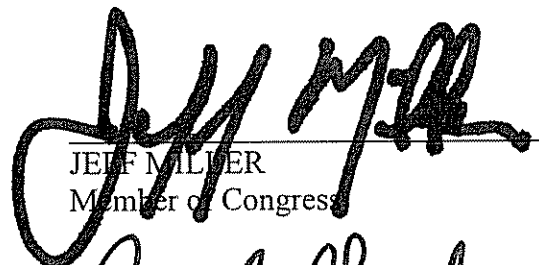

EDOLPHUS TOWNS
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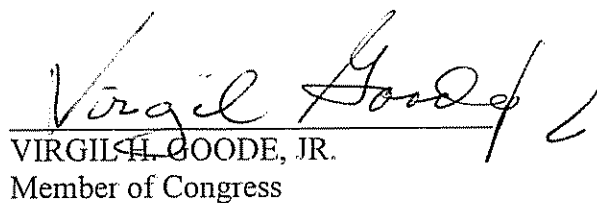

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JIM MARSHALL
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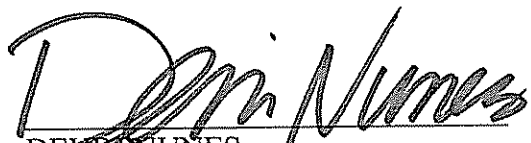

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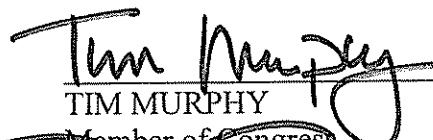

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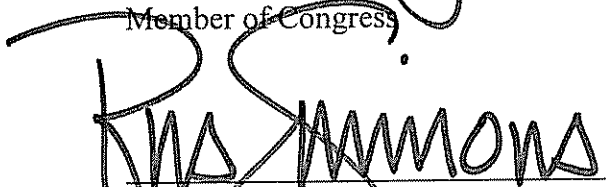

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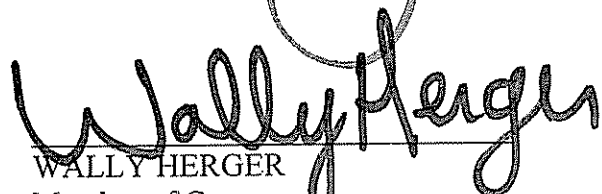

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Member of Congress


GEOFF DAVIS
Member of Congress



MARK GREEN
Member of Congress

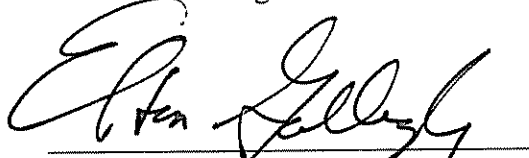

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MIKE ROGERS
Member of Congress

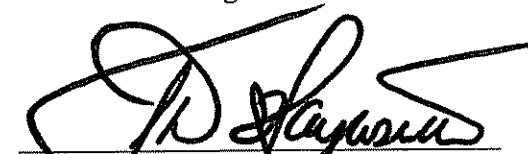

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MARY BOND
Member of Congress


ELTON GALLEGLY
Member of Congress

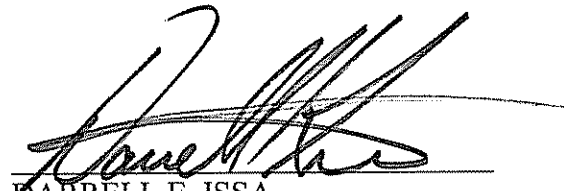

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TODD RUSSELL PLATTS
Member of Congress

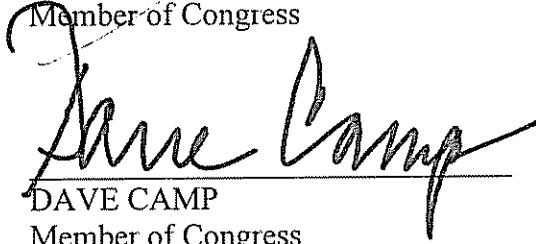

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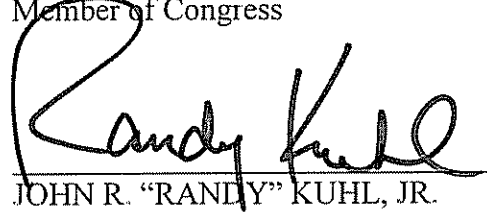
LINCOLN DAVIS
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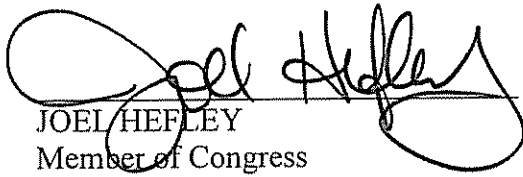
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DAVE CAMP
Member of Congress



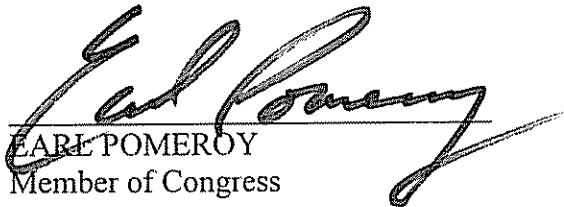
JOHN R. "RANDY" KUHL, JR.
Member of Congress



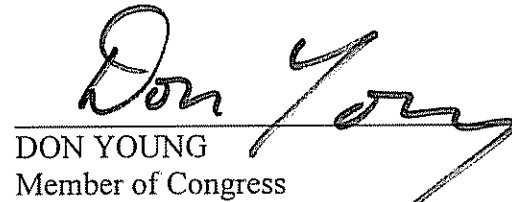
JOEL HEFLEY
Member of Congress



JIM GIBBONS
Member of Congress



EARL POMEROY
Member of Congress



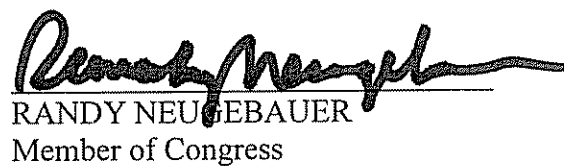
DON YOUNG
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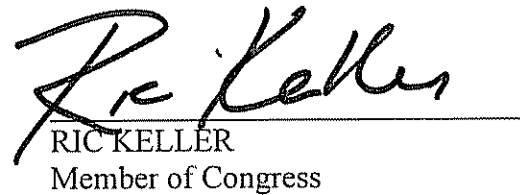
RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN
Member of Congress



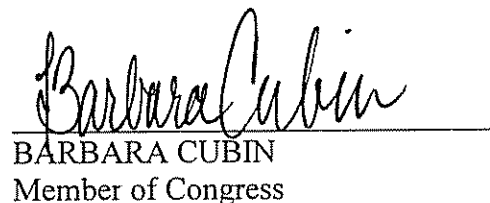
JOHN KLINE
Member of Congress



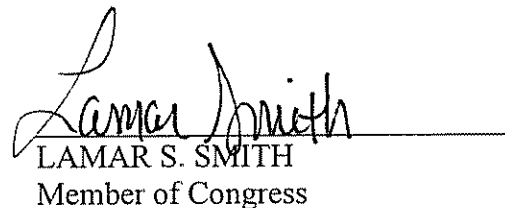
RANDY NEUGEBAUER
Member of Congress



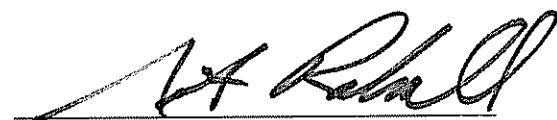
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BARBARA CUBIN
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



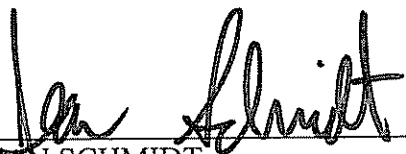
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Member of Congress



C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER
Member of Congress



SAM JOHNSON
Member of Congress



JEAN SCHMIDT
Member of Congress



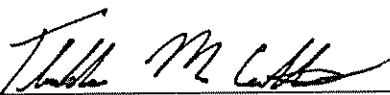
CHET EDWARDS
Member of Congress



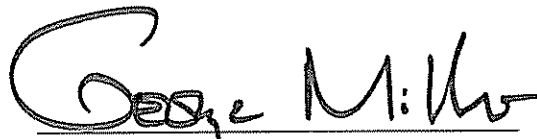
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Member of Congress



JOHN SULLIVAN
Member of Congress



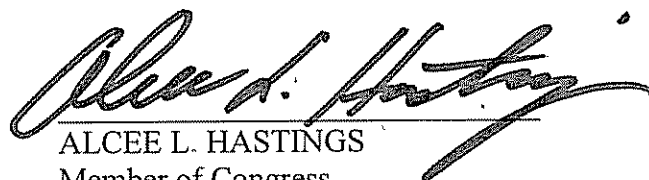
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Member of Congress



GEORGE MILLER
Member of Congress



LOIS CAPPS
Member of Congress



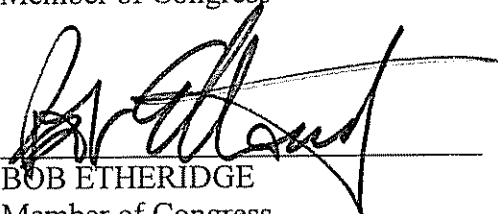
ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress



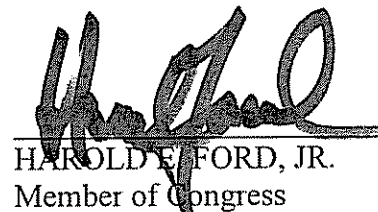
COLLIN C. PETERSON
Member of Congress



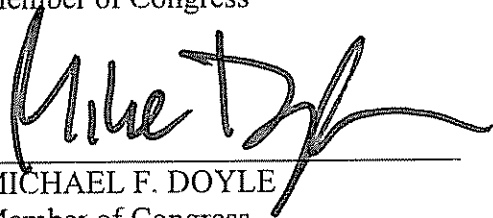
RICHARD E. NEAL
Member of Congress



BOB ETHERIDGE
Member of Congress



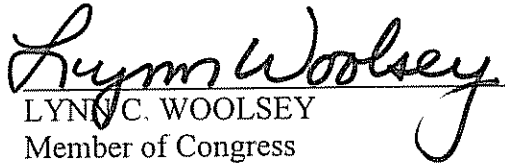
HAROLD E. FORD, JR.
Member of Congress



MICHAEL F. DOYLE
Member of Congress




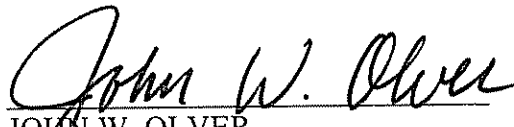
HENRY A. WAXMAN
Member of Congress

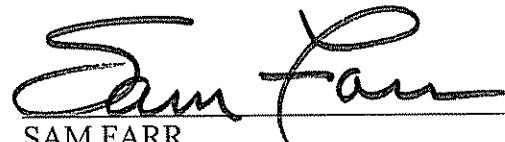

LYNN C. WOOLSEY
Member of Congress



TIM HOLDEN
Member of Congress



LORETTA SANCHEZ
Member of Congress


JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress


JOHN W. OLVER
Member of Congress

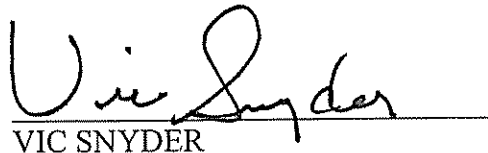

SAM FARR
Member of Congress



GENE TAYLOR
Member of Congress



BERNARD SANDERS
Member of Congress


MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress


MARTIN T. MEEHAN
Member of Congress

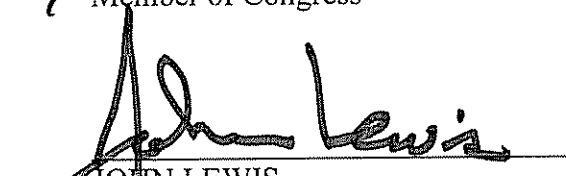

VIC SNYDER
Member of Congress


STEPHEN F. LYNCH
Member of Congress

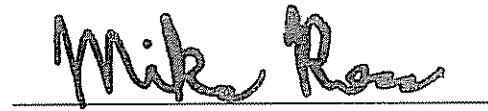

SOLOMON P. ORTIZ
Member of Congress



DAVID SCOTT
Member of Congress


JOHN BARROW
Member of Congress



JOHN LEWIS
Member of Congress


STEVE ISRAEL
Member of Congress


MIKE ROSS
Member of Congress


CHARLES A. GONZALEZ
Member of Congress


WM. LACY CLAY
Member of Congress


JERRY F. COSTELLO
Member of Congress


SHEILA JACKSON-LEE
Member of Congress

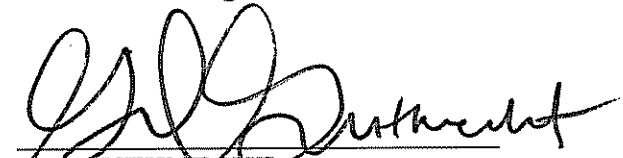

GRACE F. NAPOLITANO
Member of Congress


KAY GRANGER
Member of Congress


MELISSA A. HART
Member of Congress



CANDICE S. MILLER
Member of Congress

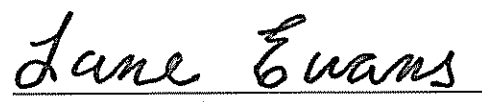

HAROLD ROGERS
Member of Congress

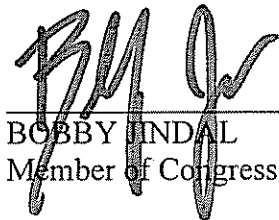

GIL GUTKNECHT
Member of Congress


SCOTT GARRETT
Member of Congress

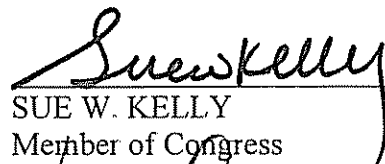

MICHAEL BILIRAKIS
Member of Congress


SPENCER BACHUS
Member of Congress


LANE EVANS
Member of Congress



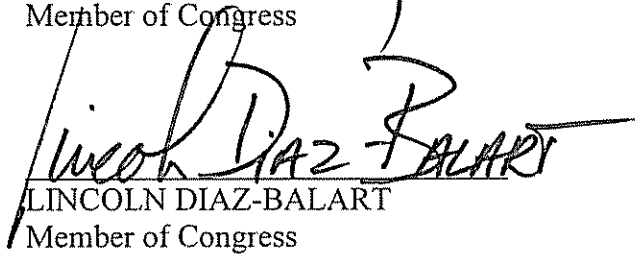
BOBBY INDAL
Member of Congress



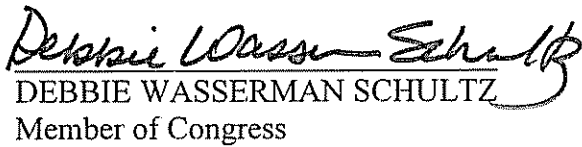
SUE W. KELLY
Member of Congress



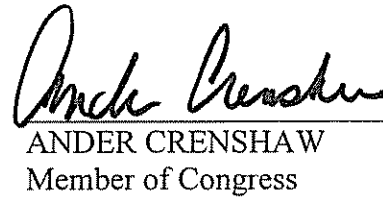
LOUIE GOHMERT
Member of Congress



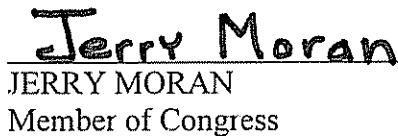
LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART
Member of Congress



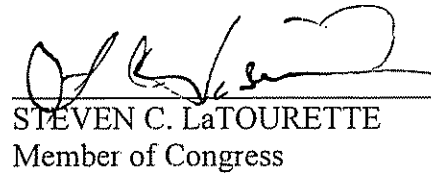
DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ
Member of Congress



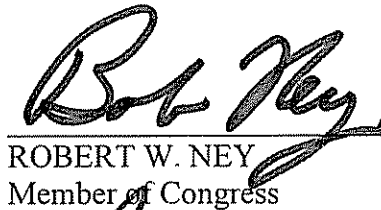
ANDER CRENSHAW
Member of Congress



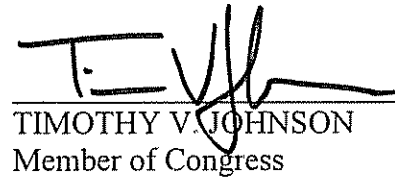
JERRY MORAN
Member of Congress



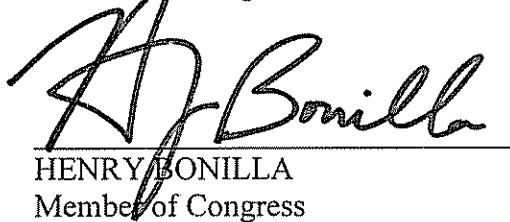
STEVEN C. LATOURETTE
Member of Congress



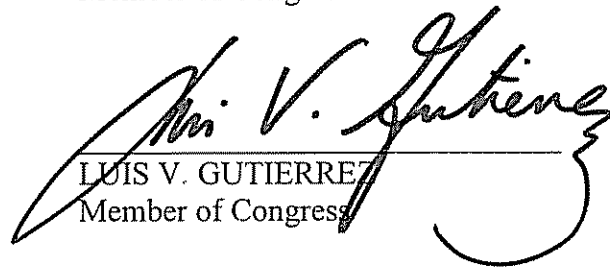
ROBERT W. NEY
Member of Congress



TIMOTHY V. JOHNSON
Member of Congress



HENRY BONILLA
Member of Congress



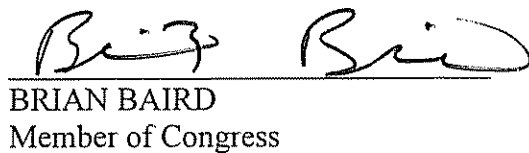
LUIS V. GUTIERREZ
Member of Congress



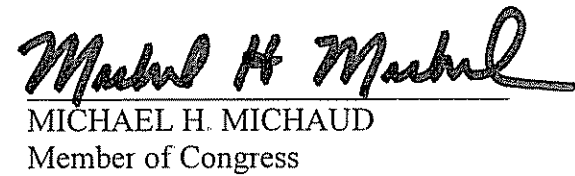
HENRY CUELLAR
Member of Congress



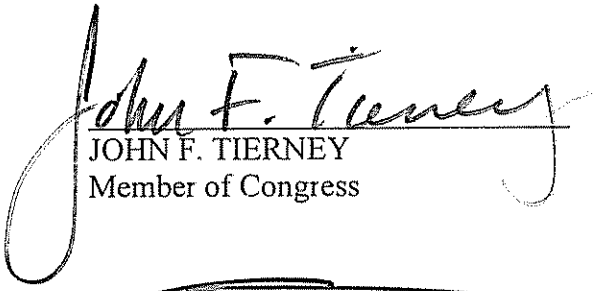
HOWARD L. BERMAN
Member of Congress



BRIAN BAIRD
Member of Congress




MICHAEL H. MICHAUD
Member of Congress



JOHN F. TIERNEY
Member of Congress




DAVID WU
Member of Congress


NORMAN D. DICKS
Member of Congress

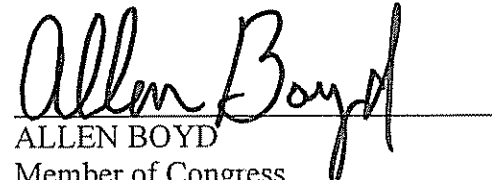

TOM LANTOS
Member of Congress

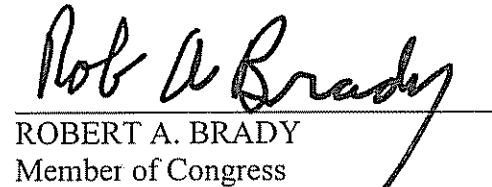

LEONARD L. BOSWELL
Member of Congress


BILL PASCRELL, JR.
Member of Congress



TIMOTHY H. BISHOP
Member of Congress


CAROLYN C. KILPATRICK
Member of Congress



ALLEN BOYD
Member of Congress



ROBERT A. BRADY
Member of Congress

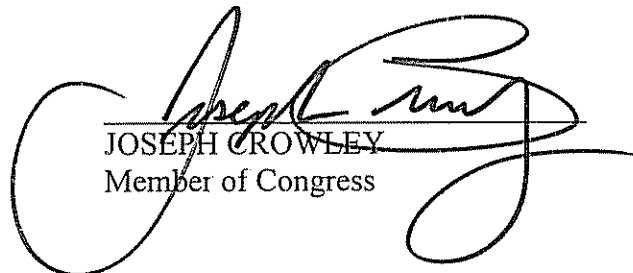

DONALD M. PAYNE
Member of Congress

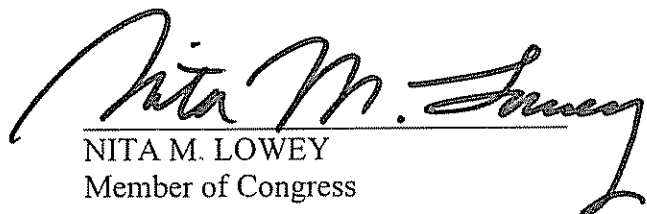

XAVIER BECERRA
Member of Congress

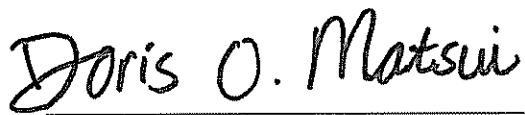

RUSH D. HOLT
Member of Congress

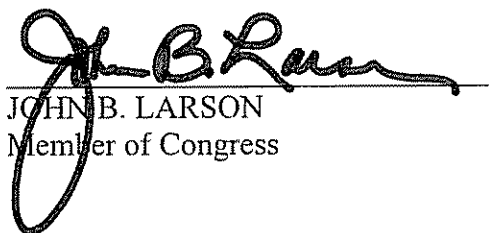

RAUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

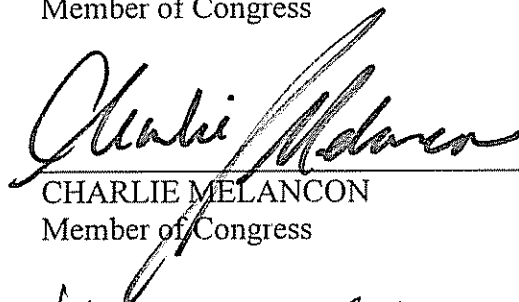

ROBERT E. ANDREWS
Member of Congress


JOSEPH CROWLEY
Member of Congress



NITA M. LOWEY
Member of Congress

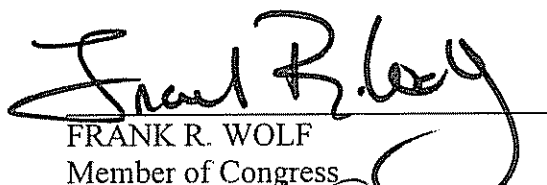

DORIS O. MATSUI
Member of Congress


JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress

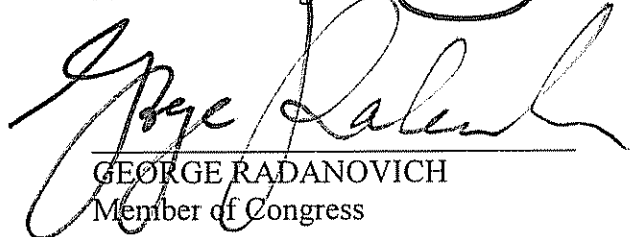

CHARLIE MELANCON
Member of Congress

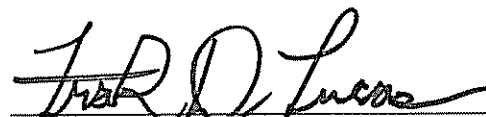

STEVAN PEARCE
Member of Congress


HOWARD COBLE
Member of Congress



FRANK R. WOLF
Member of Congress


DAN BOREN
Member of Congress


GEORGE RADANOVICH
Member of Congress



FRANK D. LUCAS
Member of Congress

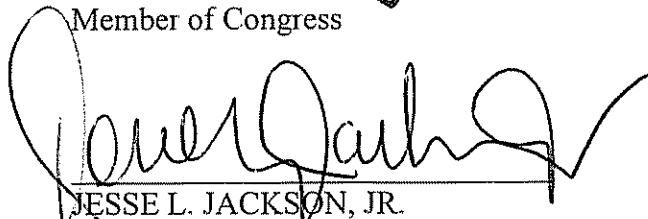

CHARLES H. TAYLOR
Member of Congress


VIRGINIA FOXX
Member of Congress


JERRY WELLER
Member of Congress


KEVIN BRADY
Member of Congress


JOHN P. MURTHA
Member of Congress


JESSE L. JACKSON, JR.
Member of Congress



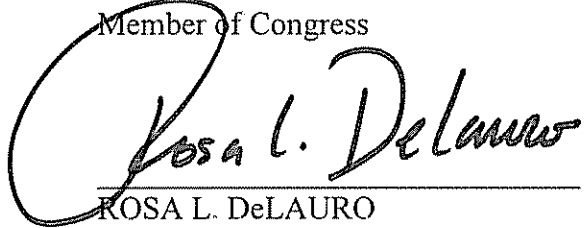
MARK UDALL
Member of Congress



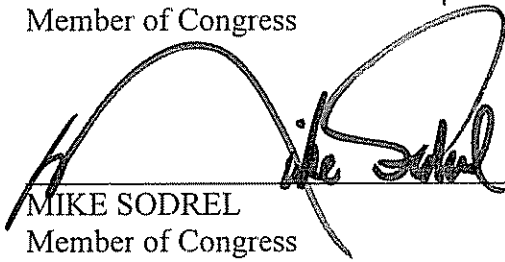
SILVESTRE REYES
Member of Congress



PATRICK T. McHENRY
Member of Congress



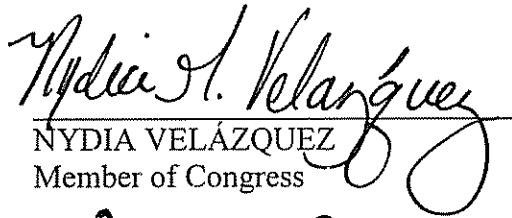
ROSA L. DeLAURO
Member of Congress



MIKE SODREL
Member of Congress



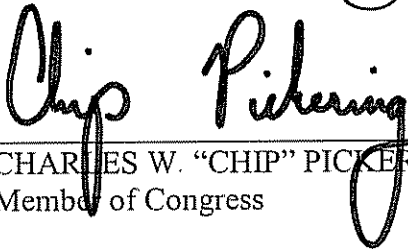
RODNEY ALEXANDER
Member of Congress



NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ
Member of Congress



DAVID L. HOBSON
Member of Congress



CHARLES W. "CHIP" PICKERING
Member of Congress



MARILYN N. MUSGRAVE
Member of Congress



JIM McCRERY
Member of Congress



MARTIN OLAV SABO
Member of Congress



KEN CALVERT
Member of Congress