

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 21, 2010

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your ongoing work to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and for your commitment of \$300 million in U.S. aid to rebuild the Gaza Strip. We write to you with great concern about the ongoing crisis in Gaza.

The people of Gaza have suffered enormously since the blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt following Hamas's coup, and particularly following Operation Cast Lead. We also sympathize deeply with the people of southern Israel who have suffered from abhorrent rocket and mortar attacks. We recognize that the Israeli government has imposed restrictions on Gaza out of a legitimate and keenly felt fear of continued terrorist action by Hamas and other militant groups. This concern must be addressed without resulting in the de facto collective punishment of the Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip. Truly, fulfilling the needs of civilians in Israel and Gaza are mutually reinforcing goals.

The unabated suffering of Gazan civilians highlights the urgency of reaching a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and we ask you to press for immediate relief for the citizens of Gaza as an urgent component of your broader Middle East peace efforts. The current blockade has severely impeded the ability of aid agencies to do their work to relieve suffering, and we ask that you advocate for immediate improvements for Gaza in the following areas:

- Movement of people, especially students, the ill, aid workers, journalists, and those with family concerns, into and out of Gaza;
- Access to clean water, including water infrastructure materials,
- Access to plentiful and varied food and agricultural materials;
- Access to medicine and health care products and suppliers;
- Access to sanitation supplies, including sanitation infrastructure materials;
- Access to construction materials for repairs and rebuilding;
- Access to fuel;
- Access to spare parts;
- Prompt passage into and out of Gaza for commercial and agricultural goods; and
- Publication and review of the list of items prohibited to the people of Gaza.

Winter has arrived and the needs of the people grow ever more pressing. For example, the ban on building materials is preventing the reconstruction of thousands of innocent

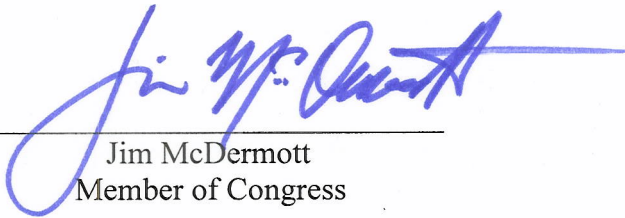
families' damaged homes. There is also a concern that unrepaired sewage treatment plants will overflow and damage surrounding property and water resources.

Despite ad hoc easing of the blockade, there has been no significant improvement in the quantity and scope of goods allowed into Gaza. Both the number of trucks entering Gaza per month and the number of days the crossings have been open have declined since March. This crisis has devastated livelihoods, entrenched a poverty rate of over 70%, increased dependence on erratic international aid, allowed the deterioration of public infrastructure, and led to the marked decline of the accessibility of essential services.

The humanitarian and political consequences of a continued near-blockade would be disastrous. Easing the blockade on Gaza will not only improve the conditions on the ground for Gaza's civilian population, but will also undermine the tunnel economy which has strengthened Hamas. Under current conditions, our aid remains little more than an unrealized pledge. Most importantly, lifting these restrictions will give civilians in Gaza a tangible sense that diplomacy can be an effective tool for bettering their conditions.

Your Administration's overarching Middle East peace efforts will benefit Israel, the Palestinians, and the entire region. The people of Gaza, along with all the peoples of the region, must see that the United States is dedicated to addressing the legitimate security needs of the State of Israel and to ensuring that the legitimate needs of the Palestinian population are met.

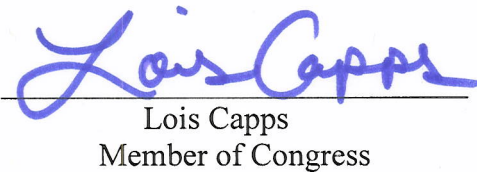
Sincerely,



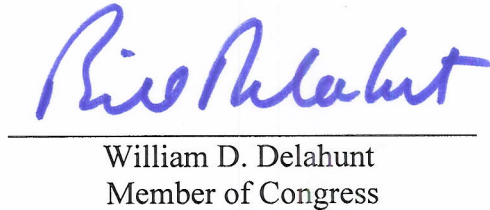
Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



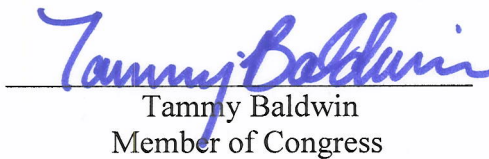
Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



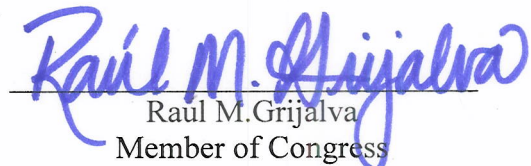
Lois Capps
Member of Congress



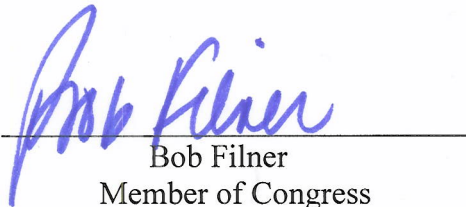
William D. Delahunt
Member of Congress



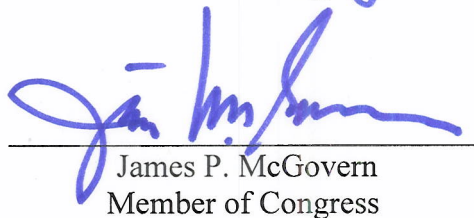
Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress



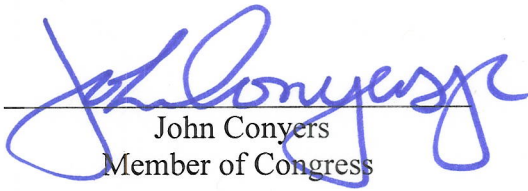
Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



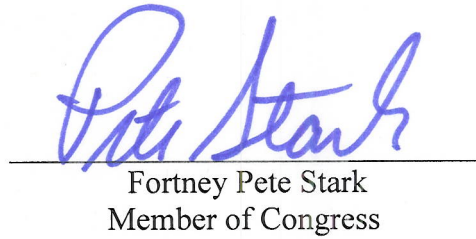
Bob Filner
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



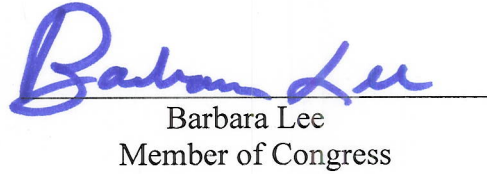
John Conyers
Member of Congress



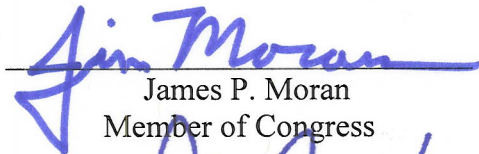
Fortney Pete Stark
Member of Congress



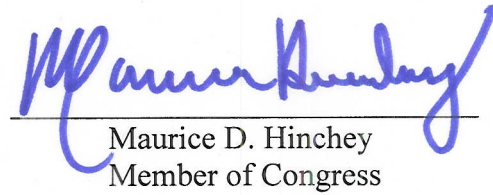
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



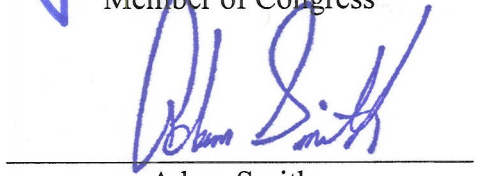
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



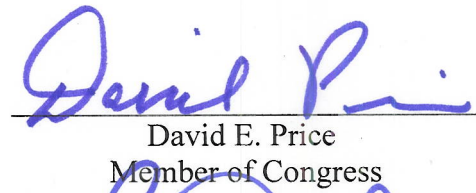
James P. Moran
Member of Congress



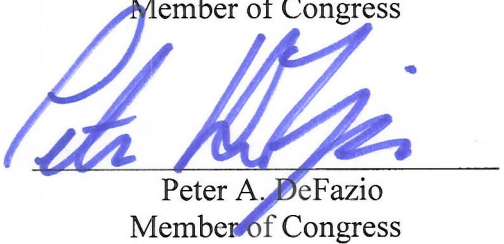
Maurice D. Hinchey
Member of Congress



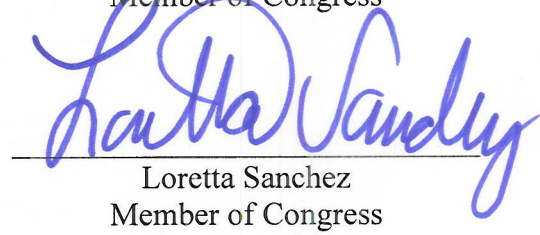
Adam Smith
Member of Congress



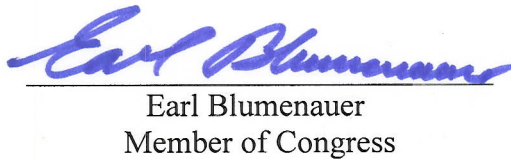
David E. Price
Member of Congress



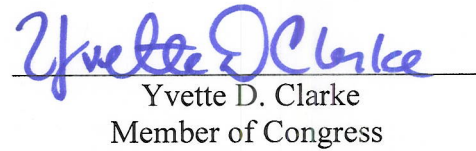
Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



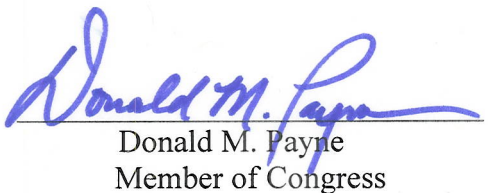
Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress



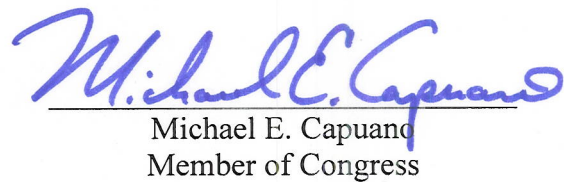
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



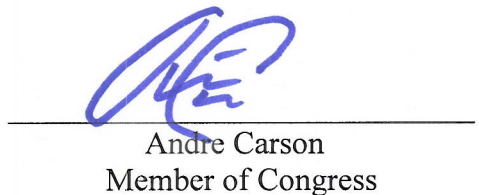
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



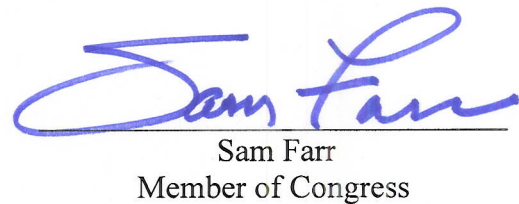
Donald M. Payne
Member of Congress



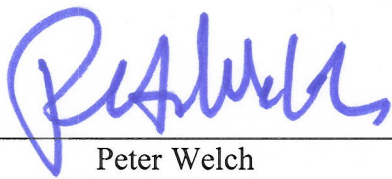
Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress



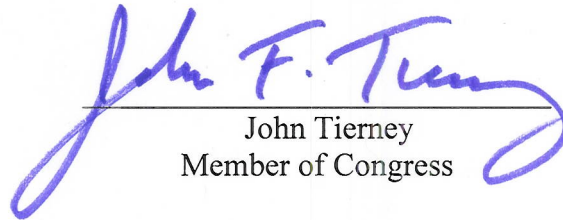
Andre Carson
Member of Congress



Sam Farr
Member of Congress



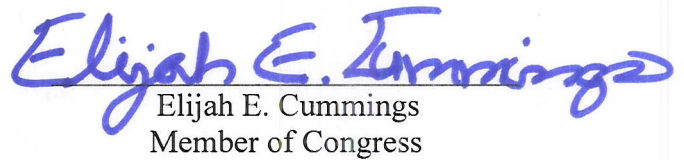
Peter Welch
Member of Congress



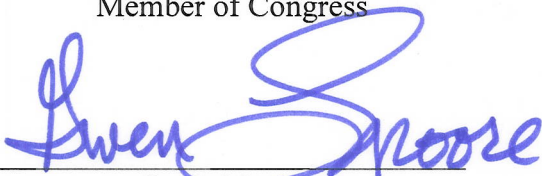
John Tierney
Member of Congress



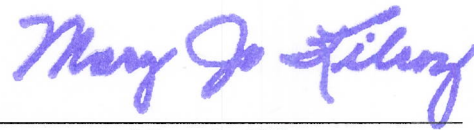
Chaka Fattah
Member of Congress



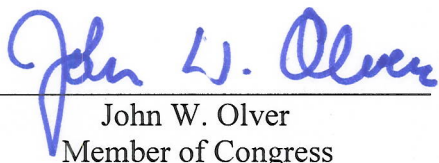
Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress



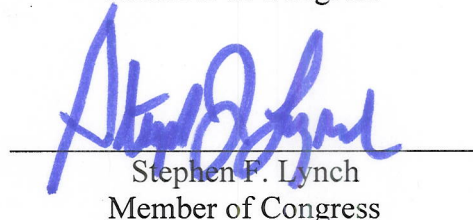
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



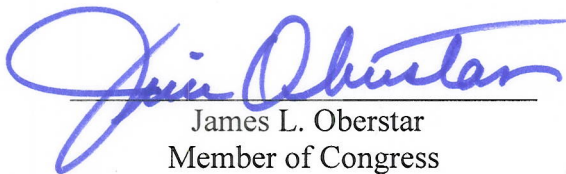
Mary Jo Kilroy
Member of Congress



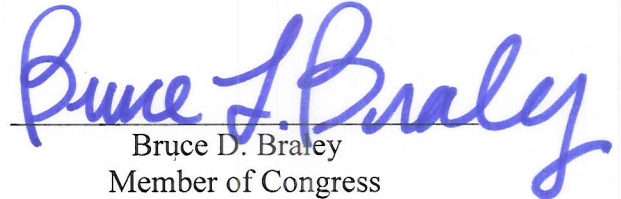
John W. Olver
Member of Congress



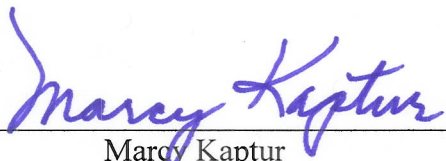
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



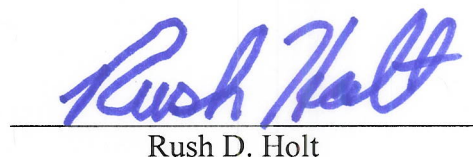
James L. Oberstar
Member of Congress



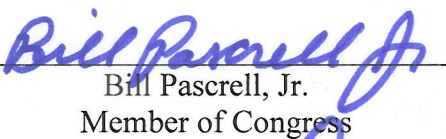
Bruce D. Braley
Member of Congress



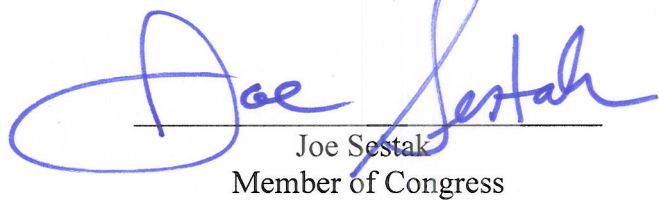
Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



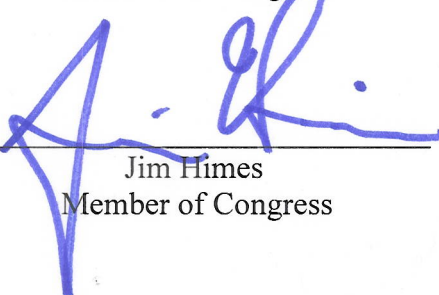
Rush D. Holt
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



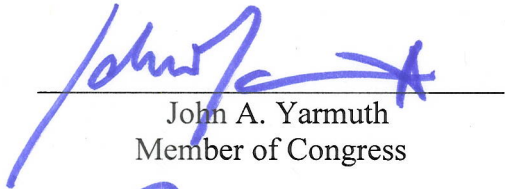
Joe Sestak
Member of Congress

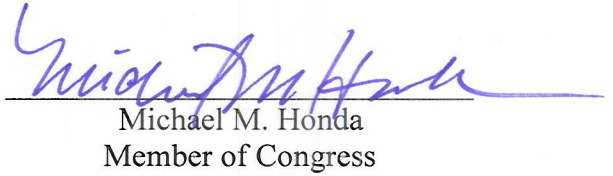


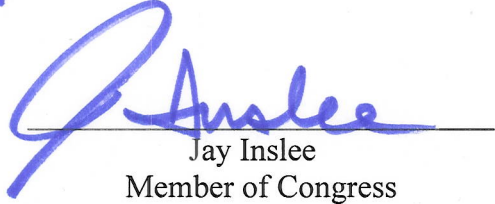
Jim Himes
Member of Congress

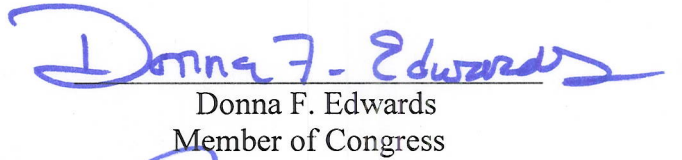


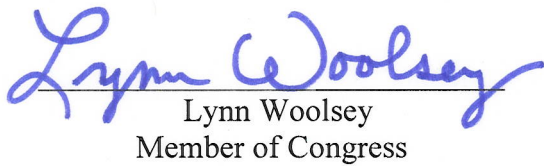
Nick J. Rahall II
Member of Congress

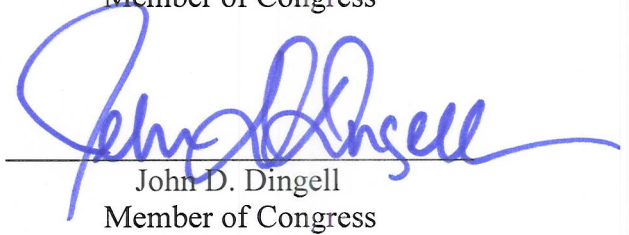

John A. Yarmuth
Member of Congress



Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress

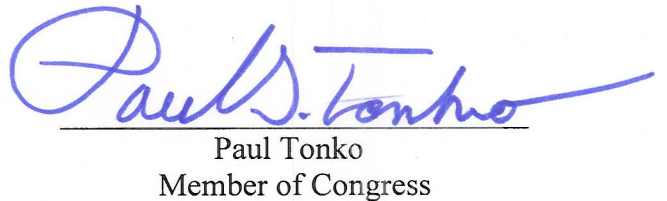

Jay Inslee
Member of Congress

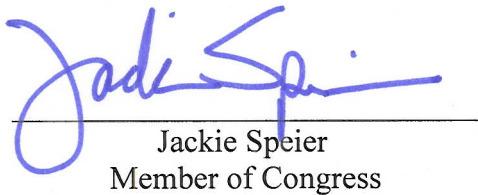

Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress

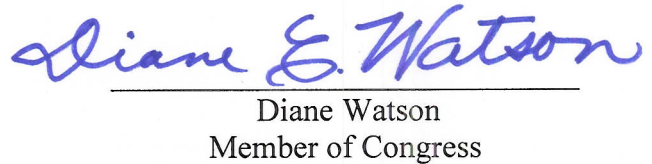

Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress

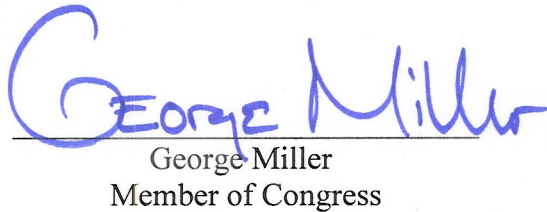

John D. Dingell
Member of Congress

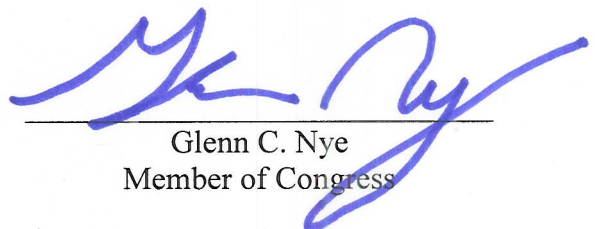

Brian Baird
Member of Congress


Paul Tonko
Member of Congress

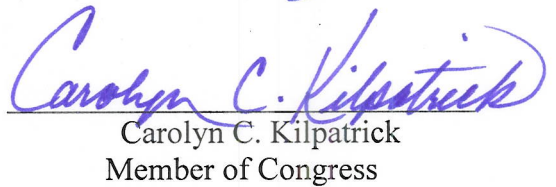

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress


Diane Watson
Member of Congress


George Miller
Member of Congress


Glenn C. Nye
Member of Congress


Eric J. Massa
Member of Congress


Carolyn C. Kilpatrick
Member of Congress