

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2019

The Honorable José Serrano
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
H-310 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Serrano and Ranking Member Aderholt:

We are writing to request that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) oceans, coastal, and Great Lakes programs continue to receive robust funding in the FY 2020 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

The science-based work of NOAA is extensive and varied, including weather observations and space data systems. In this letter, we call your attention to the work done by the “wet side” of NOAA. We request that you carefully look at the overall level of NOAA program funding and ensure that these programs receive an equitable proportion of the agency's funding.

Many of us represent coastal districts with direct benefits from the ocean and coastal observing, science, and management programs under NOAA’s “wet side”. These programs collect and disseminate environmental intelligence in many ways. They address storms, flooding, commercial port congestion, navigation hazards, shoreline erosion, and pollution. Additionally, they support weather forecasting, marine and aquatic operations, climate monitoring, and ecosystem tracking. The federal investment here is essential and not replicable outside of NOAA.

Extreme weather events affecting American coastlines have provided a stark reminder that our coastal areas are especially vulnerable to such hazards. NOAA requires adequate funding to conduct its various missions to defend our coastline and conserve marine ecosystems. These programs protect coastal habitats, provide services to translate science for resource users, and support coastal communities.

Our economy depends on a healthy ocean, and a healthy ocean depends on strong investments in these NOAA “wet programs.” As you craft your FY 2020 appropriations bill, we respectfully request that the following programs be prioritized with the robust funding necessary to capably fulfill their missions:

National Ocean Service (NOS)

Marine Debris Program – \$10M

The Marine Debris Program conducts reduction, prevention, and research activities, and supports grants, partnerships, and contracts to address marine debris. Marine debris, particularly plastic waste pollution, has become one of the most widespread pollution problems facing the world’s oceans and waterways. It has serious effects on the marine environment, causing impacts from wildlife entanglement, ingestion and ghostfishing. It can also have economic impacts by contributing to navigational hazards and vessel damage. More research is needed in these critical areas to support data-driven policy solutions to prevent plastic from entering the environment.

To evaluate, track, and clean up debris, we request at least \$10 million in funding, as part of the Coastal Science, Assessment, and Response and Restoration budget line.

Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) – \$50.5M

IOOS is a national network of 11 regional observing systems, led by NOAA’s National Ocean Service. IOOS provides the ability to understand what happens above and below the surface. Its observations inform maritime stakeholders, and its operations coordinate data sharing among the national IOOS network. IOOS utilizes cutting edge observation technology that supports navigation, environmental protection, fisheries management, and other offshore uses.

- ***Regional Observations – \$43.7M***

The Regional IOOS line funds several distinct activities, including competitive base funding for the regional systems, operation of the high frequency radar surface currents mapping system, a glider fleet, and technology innovation grants.

IOOS provides the nation with enhanced coastal and Great Lakes observing and forecasting capabilities. Regional systems, working with NOAA and other Federal agencies, address specific

needs of stakeholders, including maritime commerce, fisheries, offshore energy, public health, ocean acidification, and preparation for extreme weather events. IOOS data are available in near-real time, as well as retrospectively, and support a variety of missions.

Real-time applications of the data include tracking oil spills, assisting in search and rescue, ensuring safe and efficient marine operations, monitoring nutrient pollution that can help predict harmful algal blooms, and assessing the fate and transport of land runoff and offshore discharges. Long-term data sets inform our understanding of regional climate impacts and the effectiveness of management decisions.

- ***Navigation, Observations and Positioning - \$6.8 M***

The National IOOS Program Office oversees the integration and coordination of data from the 17 Federal agencies and 11 regional systems to ensure seamless access to information in an efficient and effective manner.

National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) – \$30M

This funding will promote education, maintain the health of estuaries, and protect fish, recreation, and economies that are essential to local communities.

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) is a unique network of 29 sites established through a partnership between NOAA and coastal states and territories for long-term research, education, and coastal stewardship. Many of these sites serve as living classrooms where innovative research is happening, and citizens can interact and engage with their local coastal habitat.

We are requesting \$30 million for National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) operations, to meet the basic requirements of operating the growing number of reserve sites and providing the products the program delivers.

NERRS impacts wetlands management in numerous states. These coastal reserves are essential to maintaining balanced habitats and protecting our way of life in these parts of the country. Moreover, the educational benefits through NERRS provide benefits many times over in helping future generations better understand coastal ecology.

By protecting estuaries and coasts, NERRS reduces community vulnerability to hazards, supports the nation's coastal economy, and provides robust, credible scientific research.

Coastal Management Grants – \$80.5M

We request \$80.5 million in total for the NOAA Coastal Management Grants programs. This request continues to fund these programs at levels necessary to maintain the state coastal programs.

Additionally, in support of these programs, we request the following report language:

Coastal Zone Management Grants, which states match nearly dollar-for-dollar, are vital to the local-state-federal investment needed to address the coastal hazards that threaten communities and coastal dependent economies. With support from NOAA, State Coastal Programs are best positioned to foster partnerships and networks that efficiently and effectively address the gap in resources coastal communities face when preparing for and responding to threats including shoreline erosion, coastal storms and storm surge, flooding, and tsunamis.

Coastal Zone Management and Services – \$53.8M

We request \$53.8 million for Coastal Zone Management and Services, which is the administrator of national programs that manage and conserve ocean and coastal resources, including the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) program. Coastal Zone Management and Services are critical components of NOAA's on-the-ground activities and ensure consistency and collaboration through state, local and federal activities.

Coastal Resiliency Grants – \$100M

We request \$100 million for NOAA's Coastal Resilience Grants Program, which will competitively fund projects across 35 coastal states and territories.

The Coastal Resilience Grants Program provides dedicated federal funding to strengthen coastal infrastructure and support coastal research, resiliency, conservation, and restoration work. Coastal resiliency is a critical mission for NOAA and the National Ocean Service.

Eligible recipients include state, local, tribal and territorial government agencies and nonprofits who use these funds to increase their ability to prepare for and recover from a variety of coastal threats, including hurricanes, tsunamis, and sea level rise. Project focus areas include flood protection, infrastructure improvement, restoration of coastal habitat, and proactive community planning initiatives like ocean data portals that are essential to help manage the many uses of an increasingly busy ocean and coastal zone.

Sanctuaries and Marine Protected Areas: Operations, Research and Facilities (ORF) – \$57M

America's National Marine Sanctuary System conserves some of the nation's most critical natural, historic and cultural resources, preserves more than 300 shipwrecks and our nation's maritime heritage, and promotes public access for exploration and world-class outdoor recreation, education, and enjoyment for future generations. Sanctuaries generate \$8 billion annually in local economies and support numerous jobs and businesses in the fishing, tourism, recreation, and scientific research sectors.

We request an investment of \$57 million to drive visitation and growth, increase community engagement, conduct cooperative research, and enable sanctuaries to respond to the groundswell of communities nationwide seeking to expand sites or propose and designate new ones.

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)

Fisheries Data, Collections, Surveys and Assessments – \$171M

We request robust funding for the Fisheries Data, Collections, Surveys and Assessments budget line. This includes the following critical programs:

- ***Cooperative Research***

Cooperative research enables commercial and recreational fishermen to become involved in collecting fundamental fisheries information to support the development and evaluation of management options. Industry and other stakeholders can partner with NMFS and university scientists in all phases of the research program – planning the survey, conducting research, analyzing data, and communicating results. This will improve the quality of stock assessments with biological and physical observations that are unavailable through other NMFS resources.

Current cooperative research activities complement existing NMFS monitoring programs nationwide by providing access to platforms (recreational and commercial fishing vessels) widely distributed over a variety of habitats simultaneously, including areas not accessible to NOAA vessels. The information collected through cooperative research programs assists scientists and managers by supplementing the data currently collected through federal research programs. This information improves the information base for single species, multi-species, and ecosystem assessment models and ultimately improves the evaluation of stock status and the management of fishery resources.

- ***Expand Annual Stock Assessments***

Stock assessments are an essential part of responsible and productive fishery management. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), fishery managers set annual catch limits to maximize long-term sustainable output. Appropriate catch

limits can only be set when the health of a fish stock is determined through a stock assessment. In the absence of good data, annual catch limits must be set at highly restrictive levels to account for uncertainty. Many fisheries are currently considered data-poor.

NMFS funds stock assessments primarily through the Expand Annual Stock Assessments (EASA) and Survey and Monitoring budget lines. Strong funding for EASA will enable NMFS to expand implementation of Next Generation Stock Assessments (NGSAs), which incorporates ecosystem factors affecting key stocks, using advanced technologies to better inform fishery management. This funding will allow NOAA to strengthen its stock assessment capacity in each region.

- ***Fishery Information Networks***

The key data programs for the nation are funded through the Fishery Information Networks. These include the commercial fishery data program for the West Coast (PACFIN); the commercial fishery data program for the North Pacific (AKFIN); and the recreational fishery data program (RECFIN). These are joint federal-state programs designed to collect, assimilate, and distribute baseline fisheries data. The information is used by the North Pacific and Pacific Fishery management councils, NOAA Fisheries, the West Coast States, and the U.S.-Canada Pacific Salmon Commission to manage annual fishing seasons.

- ***Survey and Monitoring Projects***

These are long-term stock assessments used to manage fisheries throughout the nation. For the West Coast, these include West Coast groundfish; the Alaska crab fisheries; Alaska Pollock and groundfish, rockfish, halibut, and sablefish. Both the Pacific Fishery Management Council and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council rely upon these surveys to determine annual catch limits and monitor the health of these stocks.

Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions – \$40,175,000

The Regional Fishery Management Councils (RFMCs) are the workhorses of the Federal regulatory process for marine fisheries. Each RFMC is working to revise fishery management plans under its jurisdiction to end overfishing and rebuild fish stocks. This line item also funds the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Fisheries Management Act, a fisheries management program directed at interjurisdictional fisheries on the East Coast and administered by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. This request reflects the level of the FY19 conference report.

Enforcement – \$70.9M

In recent years, NOAA has invested increasing resources to detect and deter illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and enforce import restrictions on illegally harvested and improperly-documented seafood. Global losses attributable to IUU fishing are estimated to be between \$10.0 and \$23.0 billion annually, weakening profitability for legally caught seafood, fueling illegal trafficking operations, and undermining food security in the developing world.

This request supports the Action Plan for Implementing the IUU Task Force recommendations. The plan identifies actions that will strengthen enforcement; create and expand partnerships with state and local governments, industry, and non-governmental organizations; and create a risk-based traceability program to track seafood from harvest to point of entry into U.S. commerce. Actions include the use of existing traceability mechanisms to combat IUU fishing and seafood fraud, as well as the operational standards related to collecting, verifying, and securing those data.

Observers and Training – \$45.1M

Fisheries observer programs are proven, unbiased, and valuable sources of information on our nation's fisheries, and help combat IUU. The scientific data collected by observer programs provide critical inputs for population assessments of threatened and endangered species such as sea turtles, seabirds, and marine mammals; the data are also vital and for effective management of fish stocks. Observers monitor fishing activities for 53 fisheries across all five NMFS regions and collect data on fishing practices, vessel and gear characteristics, fishing locations and times, environmental conditions within fishing grounds, catch and bycatch, and fisherman socio-economic status.

Habitat Conservation and Restoration – \$68.4M

These programs support efforts to protect and restore coastal and marine habitats, to rebuild commercial and recreational fisheries, to recover species, and to improve the resiliency of coastal communities. Habitat loss and degradation directly threaten the sustainability of our nation's fisheries and the communities that depend on a healthy coast. Funding for habitat restoration, including through the Community-Based Restoration Program (CBRP), directly confronts these challenges. Through public-private collaboration with states, localities, citizens' organizations, businesses, and colleges and universities, CBRP accomplishes on-the-ground projects to restore the nation's coastal, marine, and migratory fish habitats.

Interjurisdictional Fisheries Grants – \$3,365,000

These grants support the monitoring and assessment programs of the States and Interstate Commissions, as well as funding for research to gauge the health of commercially and recreationally important fish stocks. The IJFA is a matching grant program. Funds received by states are matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis. This is a successful example of an effective and affordable federal-state partnership, designed specifically for the management of nearshore fisheries with interjurisdictional boundaries. These funds are also used to combat the spread of marine invasive species.

Salmon Management Activities – \$37M

We request \$37 million for this account, which matches the funding level in the FY19 conference report. This account supports many important salmon management activities on the West Coast and Alaska. These activities include the operation and maintenance of the Mitchell Act hatcheries; the mark and coded wire tag programs; the Pacific Salmon Treaty and the

Chinook Salmon Agreement; and ongoing work to establish a genetic stock identification database.

Salmon management in the West remains at a critical juncture. It is imperative we maintain these core programs. This funding will help meet obligations faced by the Pacific Salmon Commission as well as growing demands on the Mitchell Act hatchery system to meet production goals while implementing hatchery reforms.

ESA Salmon – \$71.5M

This program strives to recover and sustain all threatened and endangered salmon populations to maintain healthy ecosystems. We urge that this program be funded at \$65 million to Pacific Salmon and \$6.5 million to Atlantic Salmon for FY 2020. These amounts reflect levels provided for in the FY19 conference report.

Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR)

National Sea Grant College Program – \$93.5M

\$93.5 million is requested for the National Sea Grant College Program for research, education, extension, and outreach activities. Our only national research outreach and education program addressing environmental issues in communities, the National Sea Grant College Program leverages federal dollars to support smart economic growth. Sea Grant is fundamental to preparing communities for major coastal catastrophes like hurricanes and oil spills, preserving working waterfronts and coastal heritage, and advancing tourism that is vital to our coastal economies.

The National Sea Grant College Program also administers the Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship, which has a legacy of providing a unique educational experience to students who have an interest in ocean, coastal, and Great lakes resources and the national policy decisions that affect them. This indispensable fellowship matches graduate students with host offices in the legislative and executive branch of government and empowers the fellows to translate their marine science expertise to inform legislation, policy, and management.

Integrated Ocean Acidification Program – \$30.5M

It is imperative that we understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment as a consequence of continued acidification of the oceans and Great Lakes, so that we may conserve and manage marine organisms and ecosystems in response to these changes. The Integrated Ocean Acidification Program researches and monitors the effects of changing ocean chemistry on economically and ecologically important ecosystems and species. Negative impacts to shellfish fisheries have already been observed and are resulting in losses to the fishermen and farmers that rely on these animals.

Increased federal funding support for this program is critical to allow NOAA to keep existing programs running. The negative consequences of ocean acidification on marine life are just beginning to be understood. This funding will allow continued assessment of acidification effects on commercial and recreational marine species, allowing NOAA to take concrete actions to more effectively tackle the economic and local implications of ocean acidification and prepare future strategies to protect our nation's key ocean and coastal economies.

Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction (PAC)

NERRS (PAC) – \$4M

We request \$4 million for National Estuarine Research Reserve Construction for land conservation and facilities to maintain, upgrade, and construct reserve facilities and acquire priority lands. This competitive funding program is matched by state funds and has resulted not only in the preservation of critical coastal lands, but also an increase in construction jobs. For example, NERRS creates more than 60 jobs for each \$1 million of federal construction (PAC) money spent.

Marine Sanctuaries Construction: Procurement, Acquisition, Construction (PAC) – \$8.5M

Every dollar of public investment in sanctuaries stimulates a greater return on investment for our communities. Sanctuaries generate \$8 billion annually and support numerous jobs and businesses in the fishing, tourism, recreation, and scientific research sectors. Sanctuary visitor centers, vessels, and facilities are key assets for communities. They stimulate public-private partnerships on emerging technologies, cutting edge science, and hands-on education. They also attract millions of visitors to the coasts each year.

We request \$8.5 million to replace vessels needed for mission-critical operations, address a backlog of needs for sanctuary visitor centers, and make progress on compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Mission Support

NOAA Education Program (B-WET and ELG) – \$20M

We respectfully urge the funding of \$20 million for the Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) and Environmental Literacy Grant programs (ELGs). Both programs enable students to learn about our ocean environment and instill lifelong commitment to the importance of ocean stewardship. Experiential learning outside the classroom is essential in engaging students in their local ocean environment.

B-WET provides local environmental education for K-12 students and professional development for educators through Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs). MWEEs are multi-stage activities that include learning both outdoors and in the classroom and aim to increase understanding and stewardship of watersheds and related ocean, coastal, riverine, estuarine, and Great Lakes ecosystems.

The ELGs provide funding for national-scale education projects to increase environmental stewardship and informed decision-making for public and K-12 audiences. According to NOAA, in 2015 the program helped more than 100 science education institutions, 200,000 youth and adult learners, and 2,000 formal and informal educators.

Other Accounts (Discretionary)

Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund – \$65M

The Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) was established by Congress in FY 2000 to protect, restore, and conserve Pacific salmonids and their habitats. The PCSRF awards proposals on a competitive basis to promote the recovery and sustainability of wild salmon and steelhead stocks in the states of Oregon, Washington, California, Alaska, and Idaho.

Continued support for PCSRF at this level is necessary to continue significant progress in protecting and restoring this important species of fish, which is critical to the economic and ecological well-being of the Pacific Northwest.

In conclusion, these NOAA activities support critical initiatives such as ocean conservation, protection, research, exploration, and education. They also facilitate America's trade and commerce, promote leisure and recreation, and put healthy, sustainable seafood on our tables.

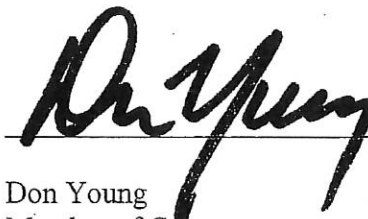
Healthy oceans sustain life. We urge you to fund ocean and coastal programs in a manner befitting their economic role sustaining millions of American lives and livelihoods.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



Don Young
Member of Congress



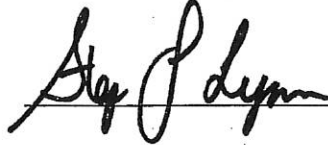
Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



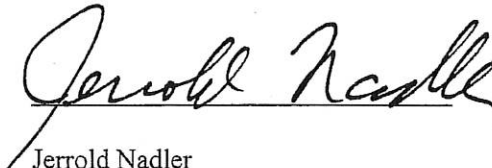
Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



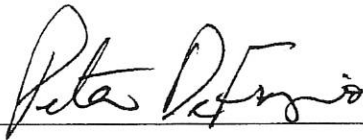
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



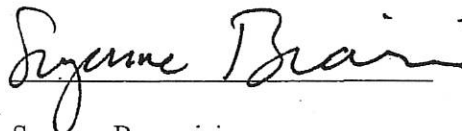
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



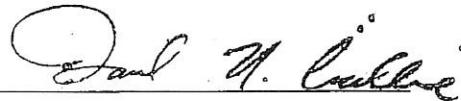
Peter Welch
Member of Congress



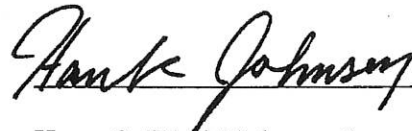
Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



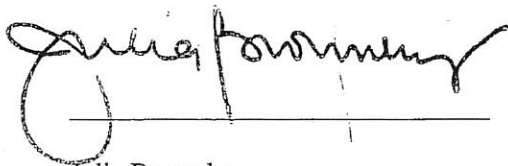
Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



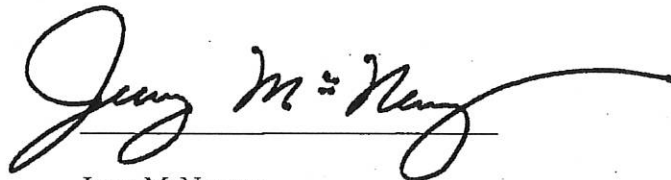
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



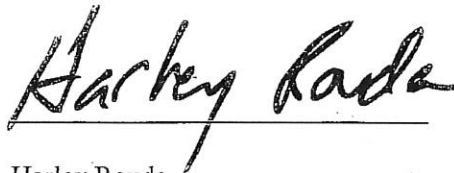
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



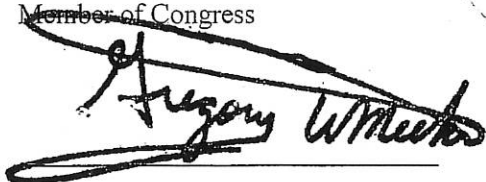
Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Harley Rouda
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



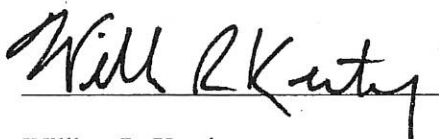
Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



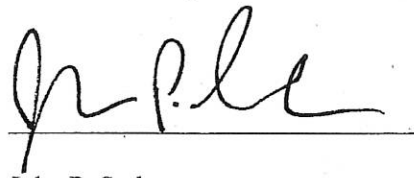
Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



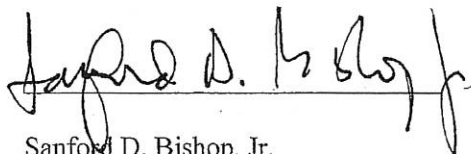
Daniel W. Lipinski
Member of Congress



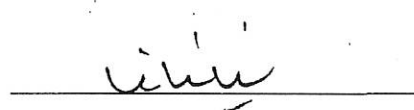
William R. Keating
Member of Congress



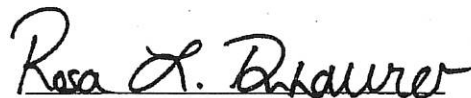
John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress



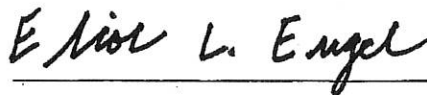
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress



Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Member of Congress



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



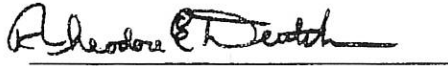
Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress



Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress



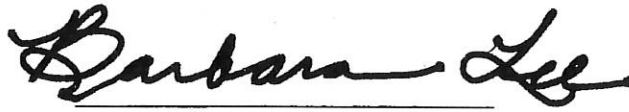
Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



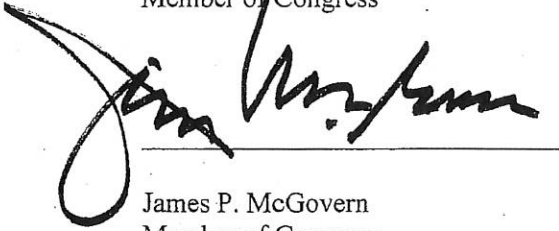
Denny Heck
Member of Congress



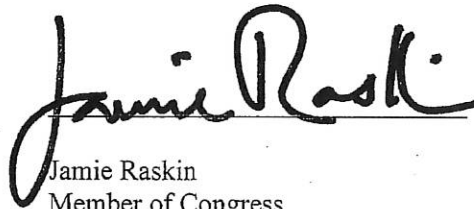
Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



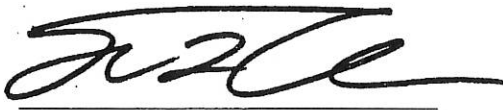
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



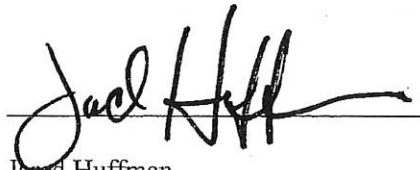
Sean Casten
Member of Congress



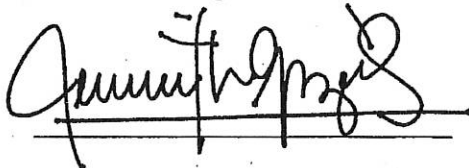
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Cedric L. Richmond
Member of Congress



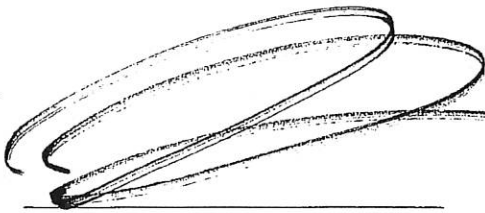
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Jenniffer González-Colón
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
Member of Congress



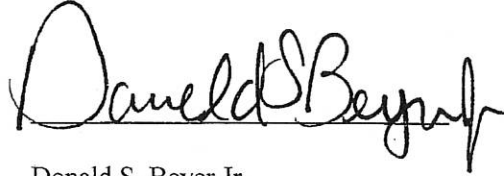
Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress



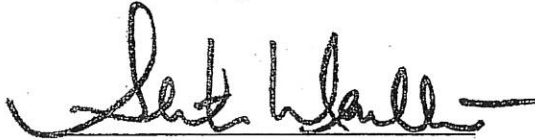
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



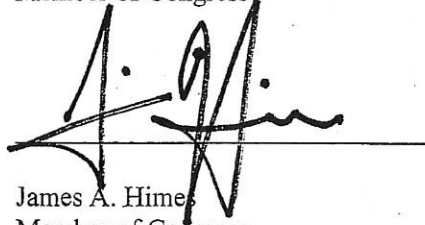
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



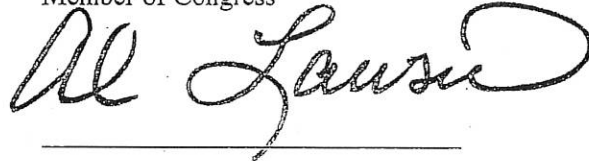
Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



James A. Himes
Member of Congress



Donna E. Shalala
Member of Congress



Al Lawson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress



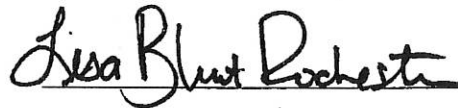
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



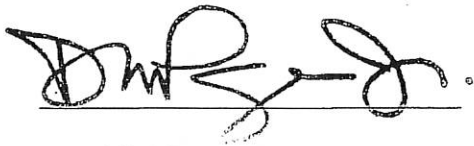
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress




Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



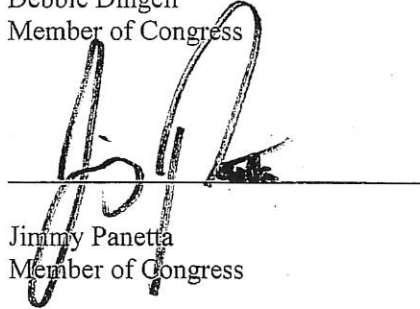
Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



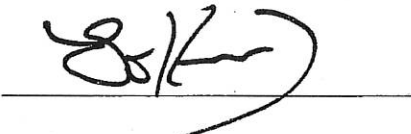
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



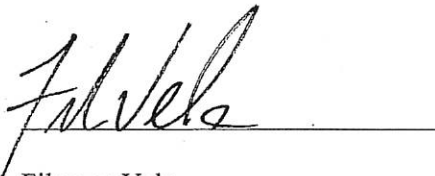
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Andy Levin
Member of Congress



Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress




Filemon Vela
Member of Congress



A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



Jeff Van Drew
Member of Congress



Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress