

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 28, 2006

Chairman Henry Bonilla
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA, & Related Agencies
2362 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA, & Related Agencies
1016 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bonilla and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We are writing to thank you for your outstanding support during recent years for improved enforcement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture of key animal welfare laws and to urge you to sustain this effort in Fiscal Year 2007. Your leadership is making a great difference in helping to protect the welfare of millions of animals across the country. As you know, better enforcement will also benefit people by helping to prevent: 1) orchestrated dogfights and cockfights that often involve illegal gambling, drug trafficking, and human violence, and can contribute to the spread of costly illnesses such as Exotic Newcastle Disease and bird flu; 2) injuries to slaughterhouse workers from animals that are still conscious; 3) the sale of unhealthy pets by commercial breeders, commonly referred to as "puppy mills"; 4) laboratory conditions that may impair the scientific integrity of animal based research; 5) risks of disease transmission from, and dangerous encounters with, wild animals in or during public exhibition; and 6) injuries and deaths of pets on commercial airline flights due to mishandling and exposure to adverse environmental conditions. In order to continue the important work made possible by the FY 2006 budget, we request the following for FY 2007:

APHIS / Animal Welfare Act (AWA) Enforcement

We request that you support the President's request of \$19,142,640 for AWA enforcement under APHIS. We commend the Committee for responding in recent years to the urgent need for increased funding for the Animal Care division to improve its inspections of more than 13,000 sites, including commercial breeding facilities, laboratories, zoos, circuses, and airlines, to ensure compliance with AWA standards. Animal Care now has 100 inspectors (with four vacancies that the agency is in the process of filling), compared to 64 inspectors at the end of the 1990s. We are pleased that the President's budget recommends an increase of \$1,481,420 (plus allowance for pay costs) to cover hiring 15 new staff to further improve AWA enforcement in FY 2007. This increase will enable the agency to handle additional responsibilities as the number of licensed/registered facilities has grown by 12% from FY 2004 to FY 2005.

APHIS / Investigative and Enforcement Services

We request that you support the President's request of \$11,738,430 for APHIS Investigative and Enforcement Services. We appreciate the Committee's consistent support for this division, which handles many important responsibilities including animal welfare. The President's budget recommends an increase of \$1,235,000 (plus allowance for pay costs) and 12 staff years for IES in FY 2007. A portion of this increase will be used to improve enforcement of federal animal welfare laws. The volume of animal welfare cases is rising significantly as new facilities become licensed and registered. In FY 2005, IES conducted 575 animal care investigations, with 169 cases resolved through either civil penalty stipulations or Administrative Law Judge decisions and a total of \$1.1 million assessed in fines (compared to 288 investigations and 97 cases resolved through stipulations or ALJ decisions and \$548,614 in fines during FY 2004).

Office of Inspector General / Animal Fighting Enforcement

We request sustained funding of \$800,000 for the Office of Inspector General to focus on enforcement of animal fighting laws (this amount is incorporated in the President's request for OIG base funding). We appreciate the inclusion of \$800,000 in each of the past three fiscal years for USDA's Office of Inspector General to focus on animal fighting cases. Congress first prohibited most interstate and foreign commerce of animals for fighting in 1976 and tightened loopholes in the law in 2002. Since then, USDA has begun to take seriously its responsibility to enforce this

law, working with state and local agencies to complement their efforts. Dogfighting and cockfighting are barbaric (but still surprisingly widespread) practices in which animals are drugged to heighten their aggression and forced to keep fighting even after they've suffered grievous injuries. Animal fighting is almost always associated with illegal gambling, and also often involves illegal drug trafficking and violence toward people. Dogs bred and trained to fight endanger public safety, and some dogfighters steal pets to use as bait for training their dogs. Cockfighting was linked to an outbreak of Exotic Newcastle Disease in 2002-2003 that cost taxpayers more than \$200 million to contain. It's also been linked to the death of at least eight people in Asia reportedly exposed through cockfighting activity to bird flu. Given the potential for further costly disease transmission, as well as the animal cruelty involved, we believe it would be a sound investment for the federal government to increase its efforts to combat illegal animal fighting activity.

Food Safety and Inspection Service / Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA) Enforcement

We request sustained funding of no less than \$5,000,000 and no fewer than 63 staff years for HMSA enforcement (this amount is incorporated in the President's request for FSIS base funding) and continued funding of \$4,000,000 as provided in FY 2006 for further implementation of the new tracking system. We are grateful that Congress provided \$5 million in FY 2006 to sustain at least 63 full time equivalent positions dedicated solely to inspections and enforcement related to the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, plus \$4 million to incorporate a new tracking system to ensure compliance with this law. The HMSA is designed to ensure that livestock are treated humanely and rendered unconscious before they are killed. The effort to target funds for this purpose was undertaken following reports of lax enforcement of the HMSA and animals being skinned, dismembered, and scalded while still alive and conscious. Implementation of the Humane Animal Tracking System is ongoing; continued funding of \$4 million will be used to equip remaining facilities.

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service / Veterinary Student Loan Forgiveness

We request \$1,000,000 to continue a pilot program for the National Veterinary Medical Service Act, authorized in 2003, that received initial funding of \$500,000 in FY 2006. We appreciate that Congress has begun to address the critical shortage of veterinarians practicing in rural and inner-city areas, as well as in government positions such as at FSIS and APHIS. Having adequate veterinary care is a core animal welfare concern. There are only 70 veterinarians engaged in poultry practice to address the needs of approximately nine billion chickens raised each year in the U.S., and only 75 veterinarians addressing the needs of 30 million beef cattle and 102 million pigs, respectively. Veterinarians support our nation's defense against bioterrorism (the Centers for Disease Control estimate that 80% of potential bioterrorism agents are zoonotic – transmitted from animals to human). They are also on the front lines addressing public health problems associated with pet overpopulation, parasites, rabies, chronic wasting disease, bovine spongiform encephalopathy ("mad cow" disease), and a host of other concerns. Veterinary school graduates face a crushing debt burden of \$80,000 on average, and the lowest pay of any of the medical professions, with an average starting salary of \$43,000. For those who choose employment in underserved rural or inner-city areas or public health practice, the National Veterinary Medical Service Act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to forgive student debt. It also authorizes financial assistance for those who provide services during federal emergency situations such as disease outbreaks. We hope you will build on the initial funding provided last year to expand this needed program under CSREES or such other account as the Committee deems appropriate.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We will be grateful for your leadership in ensuring that funds necessary to protect both animals and people will continue to be available.



Christopher Smith

Sincerely,



Earl Blumenauer

Louise M. Slaughter

Louise McIntosh Slaughter

Norm Dicks

Norman D. Dicks

Curt Weldon

Curt Weldon

Ed Pastor

Ed Pastor

Bill Pascrell Jr

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

Bill Delahunt

William Delahunt

Steven C. LaTourette

Steven C. LaTourette

Juanita Millender-McDonald

Juanita Millender-McDonald

Corrine Brown

Corrine Brown

Robert E. Andrews

Robert E. Andrews

Darlene Hooley

Darlene Hooley

Bob Filner

Bob Filner

Elton Gallegly

Elton Gallegly

John Conyers, Jr.

John Conyers, Jr.

Charles F. Bass

Charles Bass

Bobby Rush

Bobby Rush

Tom Lantos

Tom Lantos

Roscoe Bartlett

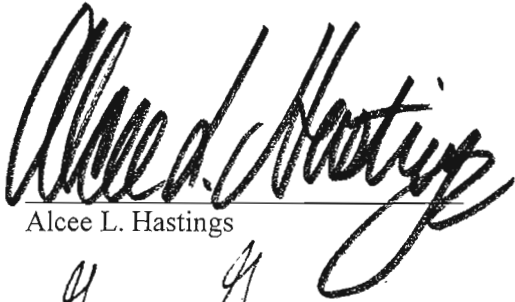
Roscoe Bartlett

Nancy L. Johnson

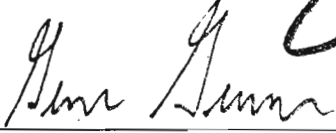
Nancy L. Johnson

Luis V. Gutierrez

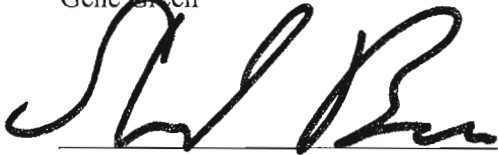
Luis V. Gutierrez



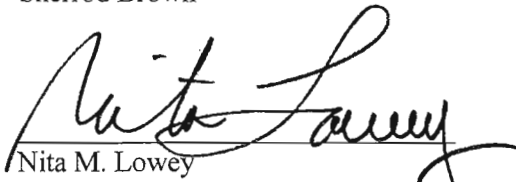
Alcee L. Hastings



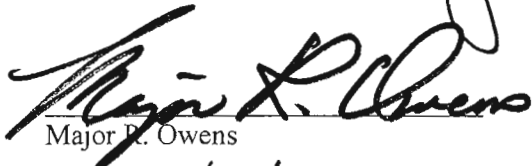
Gene Green



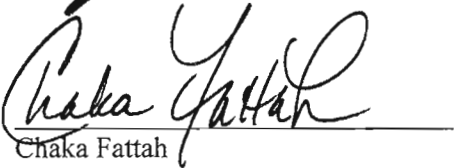
Sherrod Brown



Nita M. Lowey



Major E. Owens



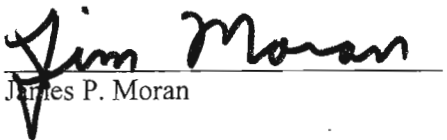
Chaka Fattah



Richard E. Neal



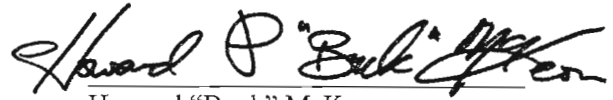
Barney Frank



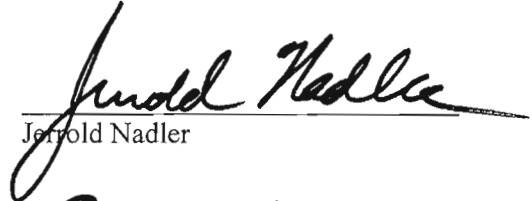
James P. Moran



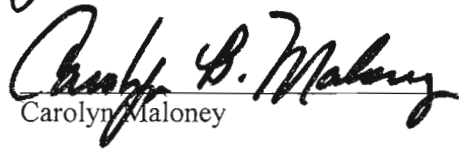
Elijah Cummings




Howard "Buck" McKeon



Jerrold Nadler



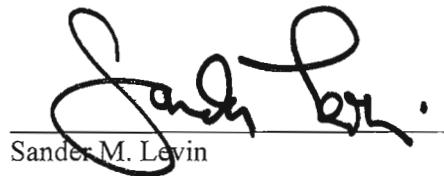
Carolyn Maloney



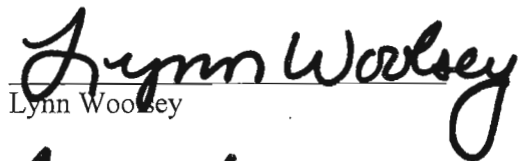
Doris Matsui



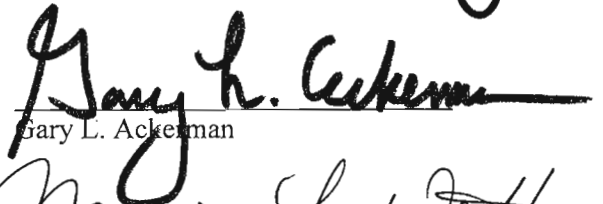
Bart Gordon



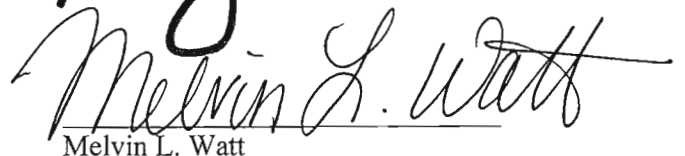
Sander M. Levin



Lynn Woolsey



Gary L. Ackerman



Melvin L. Watt



Bernard Sanders

Ed Towns

Edolphus Towns

Howard L. Berman

Howard L. Berman

Lane Evans

Lane Evans

Donald M. Payne

Donald M. Payne

George Miller

George Miller

Jim Leach

Jim Leach

Sue Kelly

Sue W. Kelly

Eliot Engel

Eliot Engel

James E. Clyburn

James Clyburn

Dale E. Kildee

Dale E. Kildee

Martin Meehan

Martin Meehan

Jim Saxton

Jim Saxton

Michael R. McNulty

Michael R. McNulty

Ben Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin

Dan Burton

Dan Burton

David E. Price

David E. Price

Eleanor H. Norton

Eleanor Holmes Norton

Peter A. DeFazio

Peter A. DeFazio

Dennis J. Kucinich

Dennis Kucinich

Dennis Moore
Dennis Moore

Hilda L. Solis
Hilda L. Solis

Barbara Lee
Barbara Lee

Michael M. Honda
Michael M. Honda

Lois Capps
Lois Capps

Emanuel Cleaver II
Emanuel Cleaver II

C. A. "Dutch" Ruppertsberger
C. A. "Dutch" Ruppertsberger

Grace F. Napolitano
Grace F. Napolitano

Geoff Davis
Geoff Davis

Julia M. Carson
Julia M. Carson

Bob Etheridge
Bob Etheridge

Michael Capuano
Michael Capuano

Diana L. DeGette
Diana L. DeGette

Danny K. Davis
Danny K. Davis

Mike Fitzpatrick
Mike Fitzpatrick

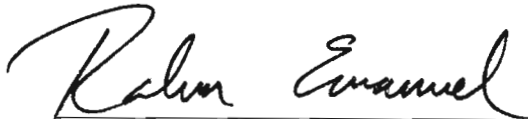
Eddie Bernice Johnson
Eddie Bernice Johnson

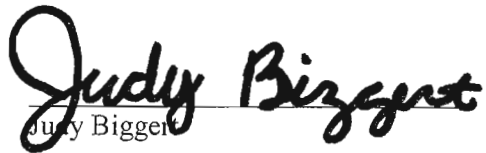
Raul M. Grijalva
Raul M. Grijalva

Chris Van Hollen, Jr.
Chris Van Hollen, Jr.

Tom Udall
Tom Udall

Vic Snyder
Vic Snyder


Rahm Emanuel

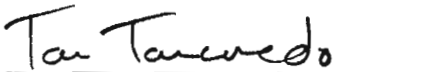

Judy Biggers


Michael Castle


Russ Carnahan

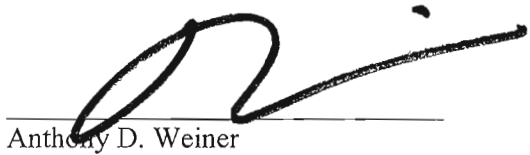

Susan A. Davis


Dan Lipinski

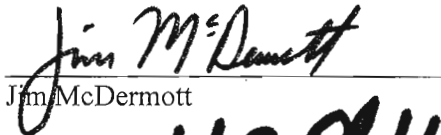

Thomas G. Tancredo

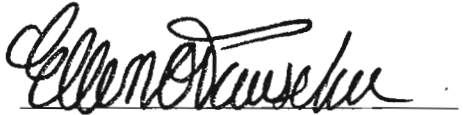

Thomas H. Allen

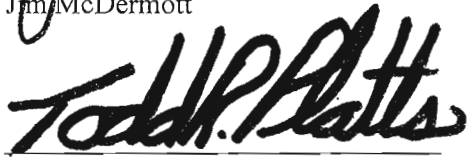

Christopher Stays

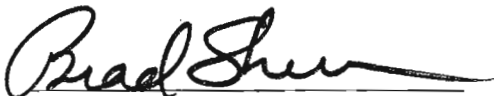

Anthony D. Weiner



Barbara Cubin



Jim McDermott

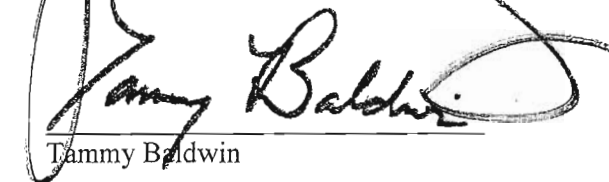

Ellen O. Tauscher



Todd R. Platts



Brad Sherman

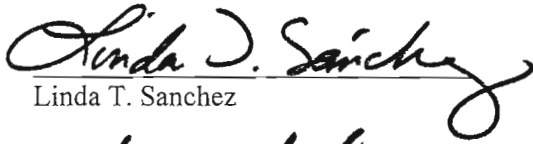

Betty McCollum


Janice D. Schakowsky

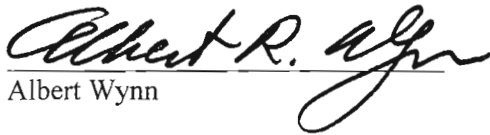

Tammy Baldwin


David Wu

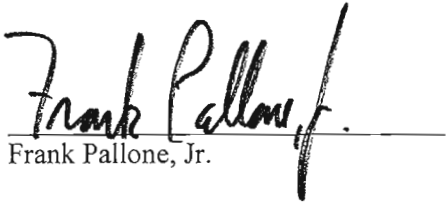

Rush Holt

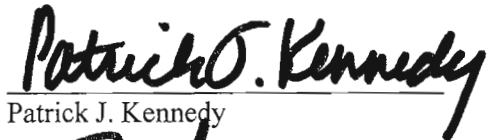

Linda T. Sanchez


John M. Shrock

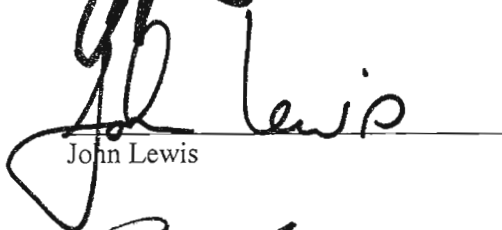

Albert Wynn


James P. McGovern

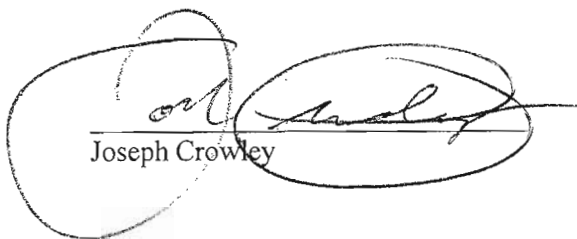

Frank Pallone, Jr.


Patrick J. Kennedy


Jay Bybee

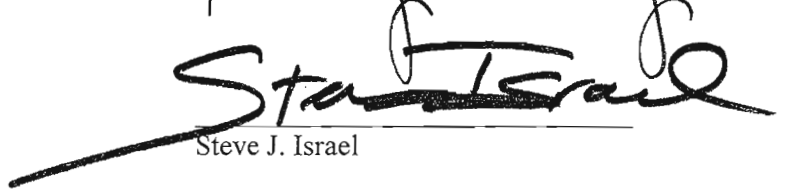

John Lewis

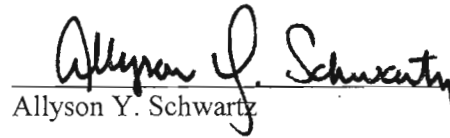

Adam Schiff

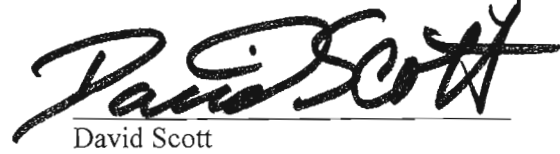

Joseph Crowley

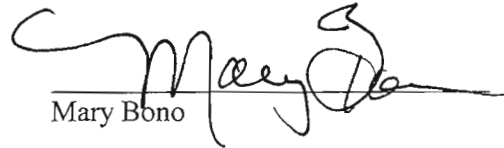

John B. Larson

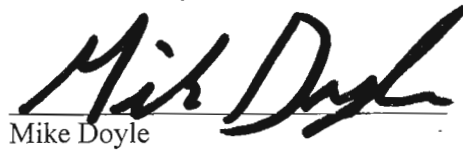

Shelley Berkley

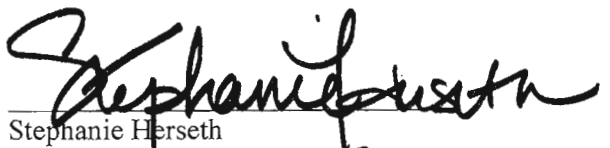

Steve J. Israel

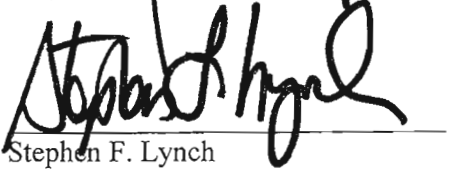

Allyson Y. Schwartz

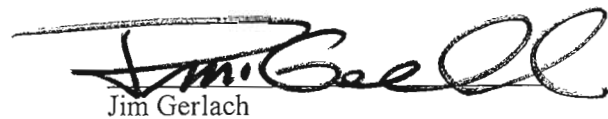

David Scott


Mary Bono


Mike Doyle


Stephanie Herseth


Stephen F. Lynch


Jim Gerlach

Frank R. Wolf

Frank R. Wolf

Pete Stark

Forney H. "Pete" Stark

Frank A. LoBiondo

Frank A. LoBiondo

Michael A. Ferguson

Michael A. Ferguson

Anna Eshoo

Anna Eshoo

William Lacy Clay

William Lacy Clay

Ed Case

Ed Case

Rick Larsen

Rick Larsen

Zoe Lofgren

Zoe Lofgren

Loretta Sanchez

Loretta Sanchez

Mark Udall

Mark Udall

Adam Smith

Adam Smith

Robert R. Simmons

Robert R. Simmons

Robert I. Wexler

Robert I. Wexler

Lloyd Doggett

Lloyd Doggett

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Debbie Wasserman Shultz

James R. Langevin

James R. Langevin

Carolyn McCarthy

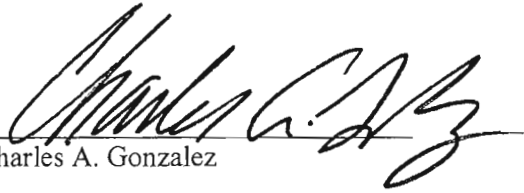
Carolyn McCarthy

Joe Wilson

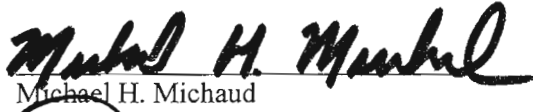
Joe Wilson

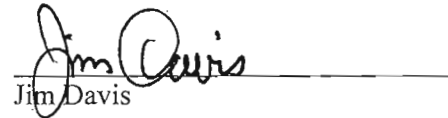
Sherwood L. Boehlert

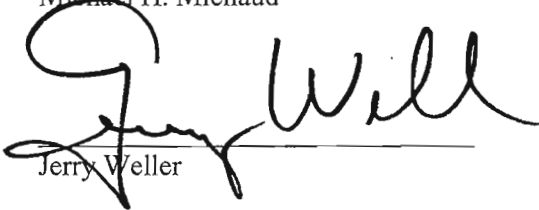
Sherwood L. Boehlert


Charles A. Gonzalez

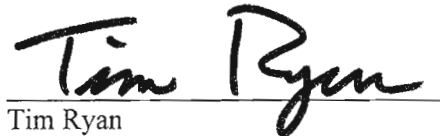

Brian M. Higgins


Michael H. Michaud


Jim Davis

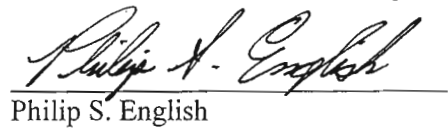

Jerry Weller


Robert A. Brady

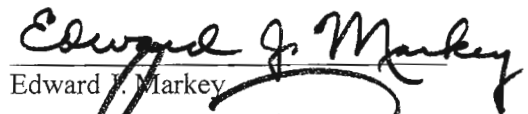

Tim Ryan

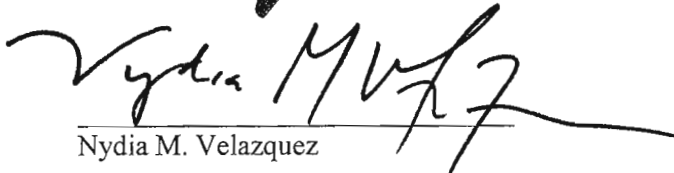

Mark Foley

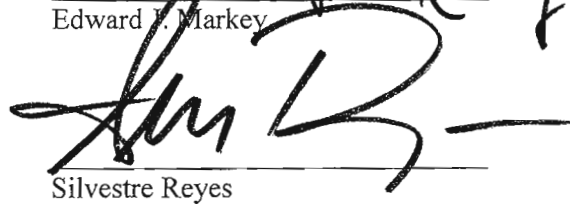

Brad Miller

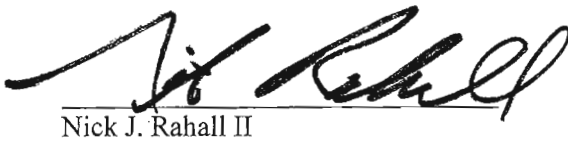

Philip S. English


Tim Bishop

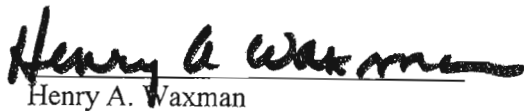

Edward J. Markey


Nydia M. Velazquez


Silvestre Reyes

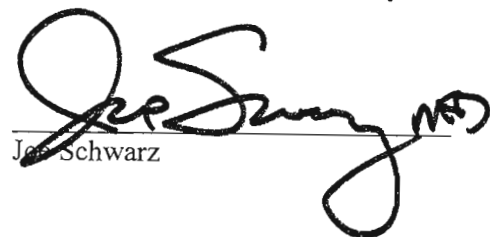

Nick J. Rahall II


Martin Olav Sabo


Henry A. Waxman


Mike Thompson


John M. Spratt, Jr.


Joe Schwarz

Ted Strickland
Ted Strickland

Charles B. Rangel
Charles B. Rangel

Jim Marshall
Jim Marshall

Michael J. Rogers
Michael J. Rogers

Jerry F. Costello
Jerry F. Costello