

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2010

Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA, & Related Agencies
2362-A Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Jack Kingston
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA, & Related Agencies
1016 Longworth Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Kingston:

We are writing to thank you for your outstanding support during recent years for improved enforcement of key animal welfare laws by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and to urge you to sustain this effort in Fiscal Year 2011. Your leadership is making a difference in helping to protect the welfare of millions of animals across the country. As you know, better enforcement will also benefit people by decreasing: 1) food safety risks to consumers from sick animals who can transmit illness, and injuries to slaughterhouse workers from suffering animals; 2) 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 bird flu; 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 Committee's prior support, we request the following for FY 2011:

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

We request that \$2,000,000 of the Humane Animal Tracking funding be directed to hire a mobile review team to focus on strengthening HMSA enforcement. We greatly appreciated the committee's inclusion of \$2 million in FY 2009 to address severe shortfalls in USDA oversight of humane handling rules for animals at slaughter facilities, oversight that is important not only for animal welfare but also for food safety. While the agency has taken some steps on this front, serious problems remain. For example, video taken by a non-profit organization during a 2009 undercover investigation revealed atrocities including repeated electric shocks, kicking, cutting off a hoof and partial decapitation of conscious baby calves. The footage also revealed a USDA inspector showing callous disregard for blatant cruelty, as he watched a calf being skinned alive and commented that another inspector would shut the plant down, but he allowed the abuse to continue. While that inspector has since been fired, to address remaining weaknesses in the inspection regime, we request that \$2 million be allocated out of the \$3 million in Humane Animal Tracking (HAT) funding for the purpose of hiring and training a mobile review team to conduct unscheduled audits and undercover surveillance focused on assessing compliance with humane handling rules of live animals as they arrive and are offloaded and handled in pens, chutes, and stunning areas.

APHIS / Animal Welfare Act (AWA) Enforcement

We request that you support the President's request of \$22,333,000 for AWA enforcement under the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (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 12,000 sites, including commercial breeding facilities, laboratories, zoos, circuses, and airlines, to ensure compliance with AWA standards. Under the 2008 Farm Bill, Congress established a new responsibility for this division – to enforce a ban on imports from foreign puppy mills where puppies are mass produced under inhumane conditions and forced to endure harsh long-distance transport. Animal Care currently has 115 inspectors (with 2 vacancies to be filled), compared to 64 inspectors at the end of the 1990s. An appropriation at

the requested level would maintain FY10 funding with a modest increase to cover pay costs and help ensure that the agency can provide adequate oversight of the increasing number of licensed/registered facilities.

APHIS / Horse Protection Act (HPA) Enforcement

We request that you support the President's request of \$900,000 for strengthened enforcement of the Horse Protection Act. Congress enacted the HPA in 1970 to make illegal the abusive practice of "soring," in which unscrupulous trainers use a variety of methods to inflict pain on sensitive areas of Tennessee Walking Horses' hooves and legs to exaggerate their high-stepping gait and gain unfair competitive advantage at horse shows. For example, caustic chemicals – such as mustard oil, diesel fuel, and kerosene – are painted on the lower front legs of a horse, then the legs are wrapped for days in plastic wrap and tight bandages to "cook" the chemicals deep into the horse's flesh, and then heavy chains are attached to slide up and down the horse's sore legs. Additional tactics include inserting foreign objects such as metal screws or acrylic between a heavy stacked shoe and the horse's hoof; pressure shoeing – cutting a horse's hoof down to the sensitive live tissue to cause extreme pain every time the horse bears weight on the hoof; and applying painful chemicals such as salicylic acid to slough off scarred tissue, in an attempt to disguise the sores. Though soring has been illegal for 40 years, this cruel practice continues unabated by the well-intentioned but seriously understaffed APHIS inspection program. Several horse show industry groups, animal protection groups, and the key organization of equine veterinarians have called for funding increases to enable the USDA to do a better job enforcing this law. To meet the goal of the HPA, Animal Care inspectors must be present at more shows. Exhibitors who sore their horses go to great lengths to avoid detection, even fleeing a show when USDA inspectors arrive. But with current funding, Animal Care is able to attend only about 6% of the more than 500 Tennessee Walking Horse shows held annually. An appropriation at the requested level will help provide for additional inspectors, training, security (to address threats of violence against inspectors), and advanced detection equipment (thermography and gas chromatography/mass spectrometry machines).

APHIS / Investigative and Enforcement Services

We request that you support the President's request of \$14,213,000 for APHIS Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES). We appreciate the Committee's consistent support for this division, which handles many important responsibilities, including the investigation of alleged violations of federal animal welfare laws and the initiation of appropriate enforcement actions. The volume of animal welfare cases is rising significantly as new facilities become licensed and registered. An appropriation at the requested level would maintain FY09 funding with a modest increase to cover pay costs.

Office of Inspector General / Animal Fighting Enforcement

We request that you support the President's request of \$90,000,000 for the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to maintain staff, improve effectiveness, and allow investigations in various areas, including enforcement of animal fighting laws. We appreciate the Committee's inclusion of funding and language in recent years for USDA's OIG to focus on animal fighting cases. Congress first prohibited most interstate and foreign commerce of animals for fighting in 1976, tightened loopholes in the law in 2002, established felony penalties in 2007, and further strengthened the law as part of the 2008 Farm Bill. We are pleased that USDA is taking seriously its responsibility to enforce this law, working with state and local agencies to complement their efforts and address these barbaric practices, in which animals are drugged to heighten their aggression and forced to keep fighting even after they've suffered grievous injuries. 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 a number of 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 is a sound investment for the federal government to increase its efforts to combat illegal animal fighting activity. We also support the OIG's auditing and investigative work to improve compliance with the humane slaughter law and downed animal rules and the Horse Protection Act.

National Institute of Food and Agriculture / Veterinary Student Loan Forgiveness

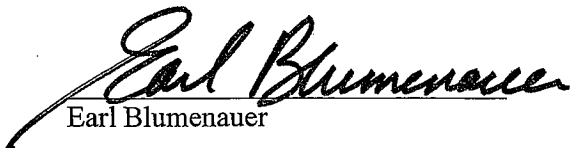
We request that you support the President's request of \$5,000,000 to continue the implementation of the National Veterinary Medical Service Act (P.L. 108-161). This program received \$2,950,000 in FY 2009, \$4,800,000 in FY 2010, and was projected to need \$5,000,000 in its third year under the CBO score accompanying authorization. We appreciate that Congress is working to address the critical shortage of veterinarians practicing in rural and inner-city areas, as well as in government positions at FSIS and APHIS. A 2009 Government Accountability Office report enumerating the challenges facing veterinary medicine identified that an inadequate number of veterinarians to meet national needs is among the foremost challenges. A 2006 study demonstrated the acute and worsening shortage of veterinarians working in rural farm animal practice, while domestic pets in both rural and urban areas are often left without necessary medical care. Having adequate veterinary care is a core animal welfare concern. To ensure adequate oversight of humane handling and food safety rules, FSIS must be able to fill vacancies in inspector positions. Veterinarians also support our nation's defense against bioterrorism (the Centers for Disease Control estimate that 75% of potential bioterrorism agents are zoonotic - transmitted from animals to human). They are also on the front lines addressing public health problems such as those associated with pet overpopulation, parasites, rabies, chronic wasting disease, and bovine spongiform encephalopathy ("mad cow" disease). Veterinary school graduates face a crushing debt burden of \$130,000 on average, with an average starting salary of \$65,000. 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.

APHIS / Emergency Management Systems / Disaster Planning for Animals

We request that you support the President's request of \$1,017,000 for Animal Care under APHIS' Emergency Management Systems line item. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita demonstrated that many people refuse to evacuate if they are forced to leave their pets behind. The Animal Care division has been asked to develop infrastructure to help prepare for and respond to animal issues in a disaster and incorporate lessons learned from previous disasters. These funds are used for staff time and resources to support state and local governments' and humane organizations' efforts to plan for protection of people with animals, and to enable the agency to participate, in partnership with FEMA, in the National Response Plan without jeopardizing other Animal Care programs.

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.

Sincerely,



Earl Blumenauer


Christopher Smith


Norman Dicks


Nydia Velázquez


Bill Pascrell, Jr.


Steve Israel

C.A. Dutch Ruppensberger
C. A. "Dutch" Ruppensberger

Dennis J. Kucinich
Dennis Kucinich

Barbara Lee
Barbara Lee

Mike Ross
Mike Ross

Frank LoBiondo
Frank LoBiondo

John Conyers, Jr.
John Conyers, Jr.

Judy Chu
Judy Chu

Ed Whitfield
Ed Whitfield

Joseph Crowley
Joseph Crowley

Adam Smith
Adam Smith

Janice Schakowsky
Janice Schakowsky

Bill Owens
Bill Owens

Alcee Hastings
Alcee Hastings

Carolyn McCarthy
Carolyn McCarthy

David Wu
David Wu

Diana DeGette
Diana DeGette

Jerrold Nadler
Jerrold Nadler

Carolyn Maloney
Carolyn Maloney

Nita Lowey
Nita Lowey

Nick Rahall
Nick J. Rahall II

Steven Rothman
Steven Rothman

Robert Andrews
Robert Andrews

Lynn Woolsey
Lynn Woolsey

Barney Frank
Barney Frank

Brad Sherman
Brad Sherman

James Moran
James Moran

John Tierney
John Tierney

Elijah Cummings
Elijah Cummings

Edolphus Towns
Edolphus Towns

Howard L. Berman
Howard Berman

Vic Snyder
Vic Snyder

Richard Neal
Richard Neal

George Miller
George Miller

Henry Waxman
Henry Waxman

David Price
David Price

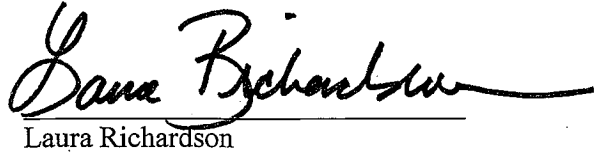
Eliot Engel
Eliot Engel

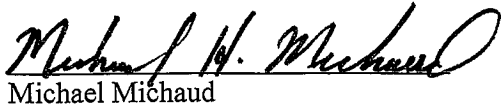
Danny Davis
Danny Davis

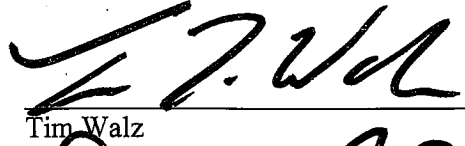
Peter DeFazio
Peter DeFazio

Dale Kildee
Dale Kildee


Dennis Moore

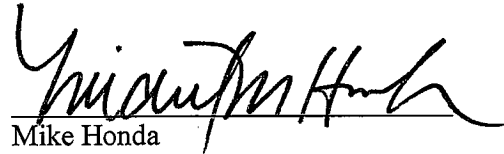

Laura Richardson


Michael Michaud

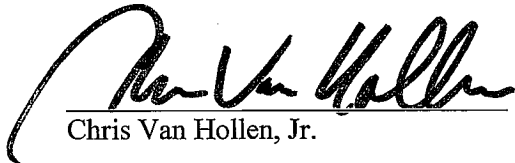

Tim Walz

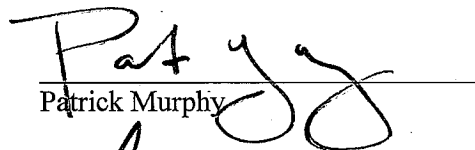

Betty Sutton

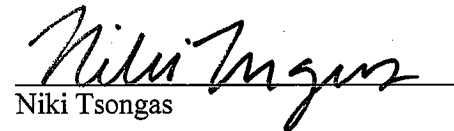

Daniel Lipinski

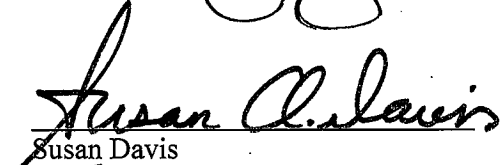

Mike Honda


Russ Carnahan

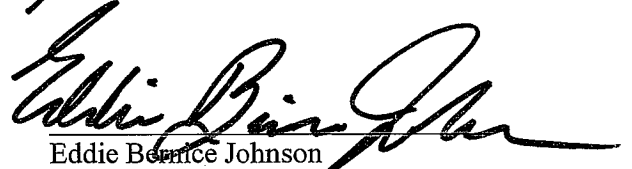

Chris Van Hollen, Jr.

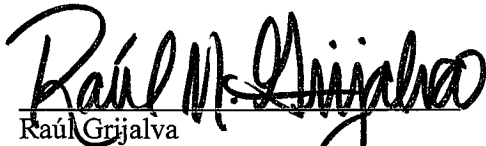

Patrick Murphy


Niki Tsongas

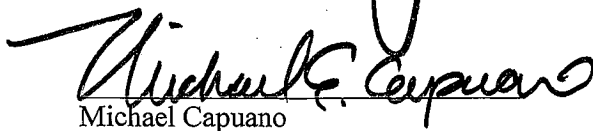

Susan Davis

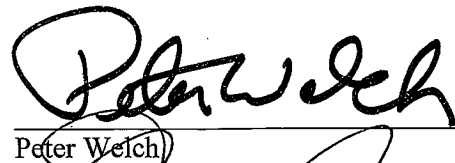

Mazie K. Hirono

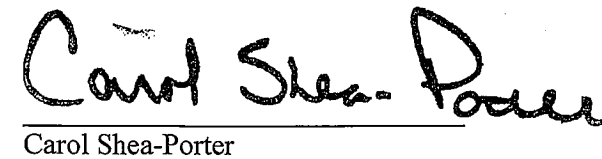

Eddie Bernice Johnson

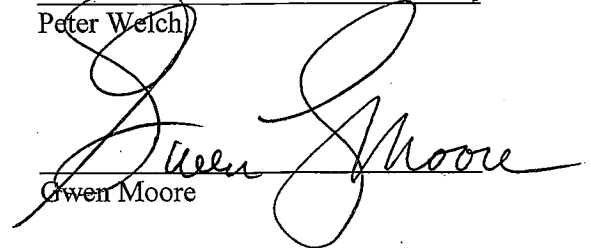

Raúl Grijalva

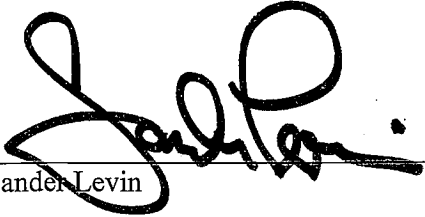

Kurt Schrader


Michael Capuano

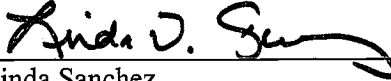

Peter Welch


Carol Shea-Porter

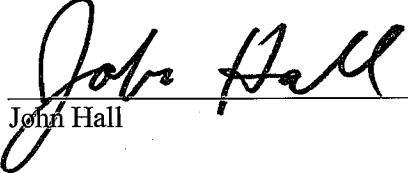

Owen Moore


Sander Levin


Michael Castle


Linda Sanchez


David Loebsack


John Hall

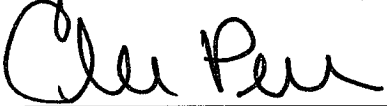

Rush Holt

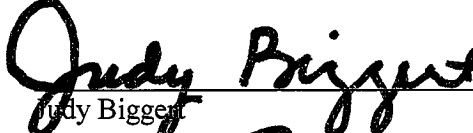

Gary Peters



Brad Miller

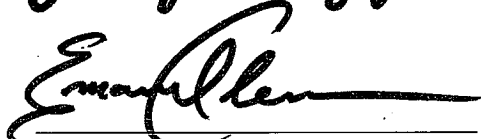

Keith Ellison

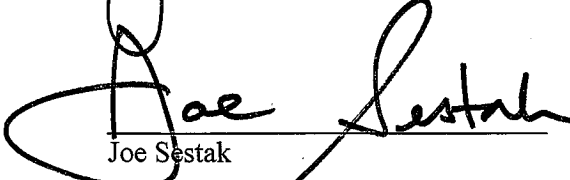

Lois Capps

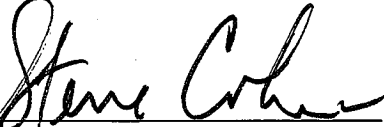

Chellie Pingree

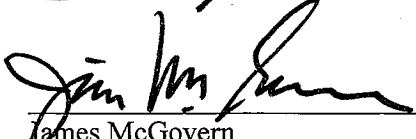

Judy Biggers


Yvette Clarke


Emanuel Cleaver II


Joe Sestak

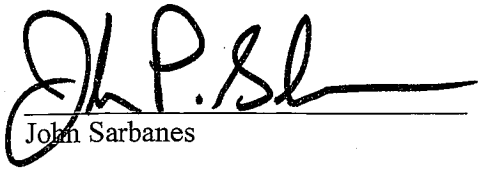

Steve Cohen

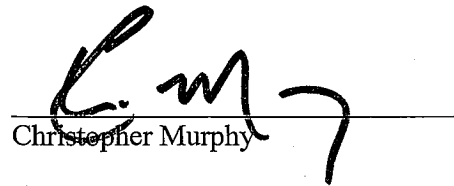

James McGovern

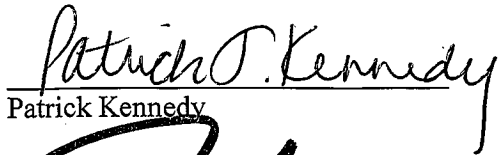

John Yarmuth

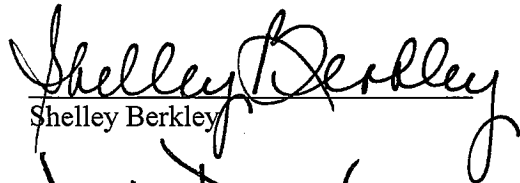

Phil Hare


Madeleine Bordallo

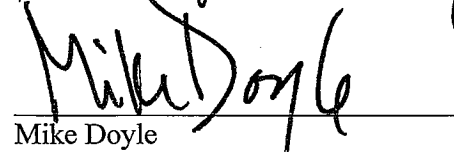

John Sarbanes

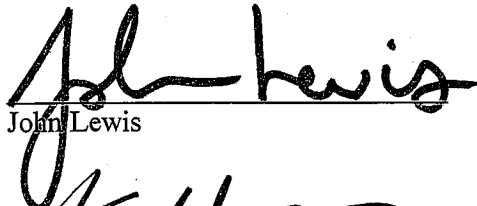

Christopher Murphy

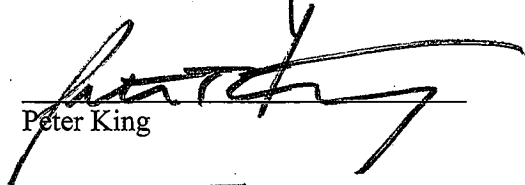

Patrick Kennedy

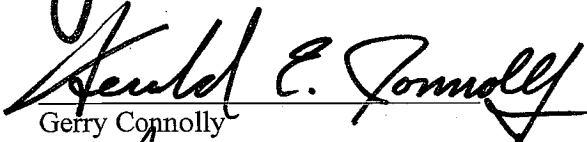

Shelley Berkley

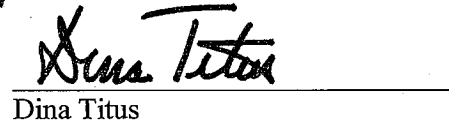

Jay Inslee

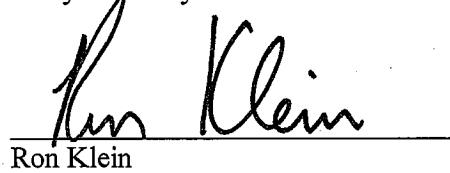

Mike Doyle

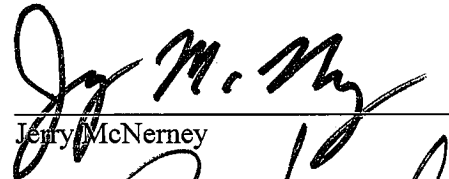

John Lewis


Peter King

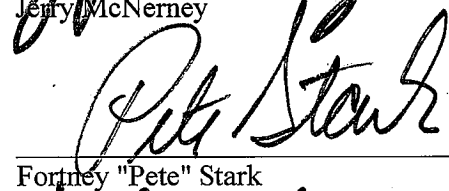

Gerry Connolly

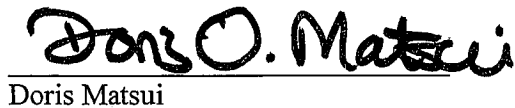

Dina Titus

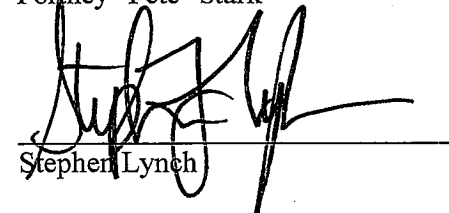

Ron Klein


Jerry McNerney

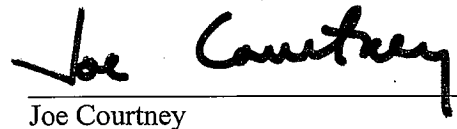

Jim Gerlach

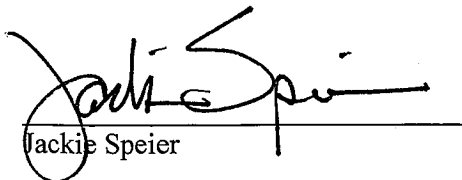

Fortney "Pete" Stark

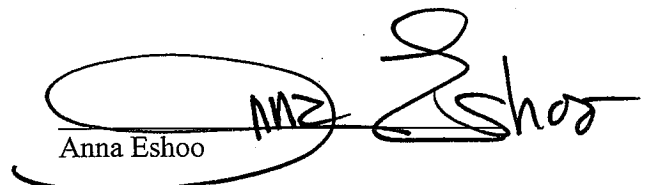

Doris Matsui


Stephen Lynch


Vern Buchanan


Joe Courtney


Jackie Speier


Anna Eshoo

Tammy Baldwin
Tammy Baldwin

Bob Filner
Bob Filner

Wm. Lacy Clay
William Lacy Clay

Corrine Brown
Corrine Brown

Donald Payne
Donald Payne

Luis Gutierrez
Luis Gutierrez

Edward J. Markey
Edward Markey

Dave Reichert
Dave Reichert

Mary Jo Kilroy
Mary Jo Kilroy

Henry Johnson
Henry Johnson

Sam Farr
Sam Farr

Jared Polis
Jared Polis

Robert Brady
Robert Brady

Paul Tonko
Paul Tonko

Erik Paulsen
Erik Paulsen

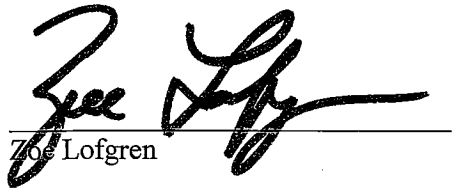
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Debbie Wasserman Schultz

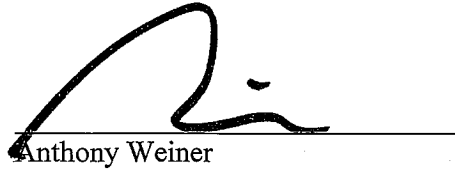
Leonard Lance
Leonard Lance

James Langevin
James Langevin

Mary Bono Mack
Mary Bono Mack

Henry Brown, Jr.
Henry Brown, Jr.


Zoe Lofgren


Anthony Weiner