

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 6, 2016

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We welcome the announcement that the Colombian government and the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional - ELN), will begin formal peace negotiations. We have long supported the on-going negotiations between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - FARC) and the possibility of a just and lasting peace those talks hold for the Colombian people. These new talks with the ELN, the last remaining major guerrilla group in Colombia, will play an important role in ensuring a complete end to the armed conflict in which over 220,000 Colombians have died and over 6 million have been displaced.

A comprehensive peace must take into consideration the advances made and lessons learned in the dialogues between the government and the FARC, but also address issues specific to the ELN and advance effectively, with its own dynamics and schedule. We urge both sides to make every effort to include the voices of victims and civil society in the negotiations, particularly those most affected by the armed conflict, including women, Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, the internally displaced (IDPs), and refugees.

We call on the ELN to free all detained or abducted persons in their power and to cease all future kidnappings or detentions. We further call upon the ELN to end the recruitment of minors and the use of landmines, and for the ELN and the government of Colombia to initiate as soon as possible a joint initiative to map and demine areas where landmines continue to threaten the daily life of civilians.

We appreciate President Santos' leadership in initiating these critical negotiations, but remain concerned about reports that the pursuit of peace may be threatened by the activities of paramilitary-style groups and by the attacks committed against community leaders, human rights defenders, and peace activists in recent months. We urge the government of Colombia to seek effective solutions to these threats that affect rural and urban communities, human rights defenders and leaders of the social movements promoting peacebuilding.

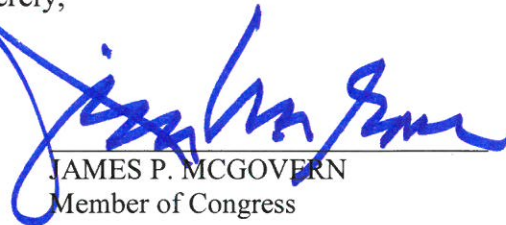
We call on all sides in the conflict to establish as soon as possible a multilateral ceasefire so as to end much of the violence that harms communities throughout Colombia. Such a ceasefire would help create confidence in the negotiations and the possibilities for a comprehensive peace process.

Finally, we express our firm belief that the United States should support this negotiating process as it has the negotiating process with the FARC, and should remain committed to providing assistance for peace accord implementation if a final agreement for a just and lasting peace is achieved.

Sincerely,



SAM FARR
Member of Congress



JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress



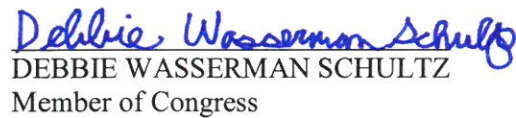
RUBEN GALLEGO
Member of Congress



JIM MCDERMOTT
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EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ
Member of Congress



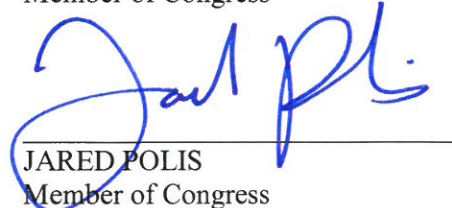
BETO O'ROURKE
Member of Congress



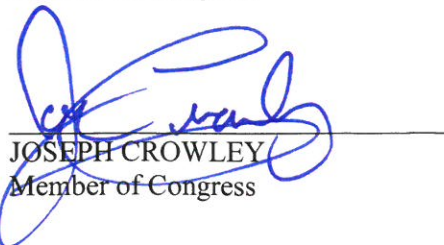
MICHAEL E. CAPUANO
Member of Congress



MATTHEW CARTWRIGHT
Member of Congress



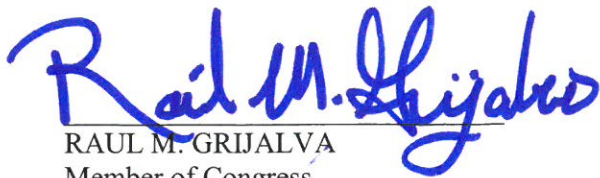
JARED POLIS
Member of Congress



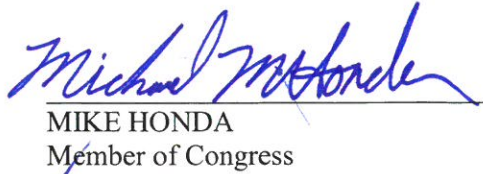
JOSEPH CROWLEY
Member of Congress

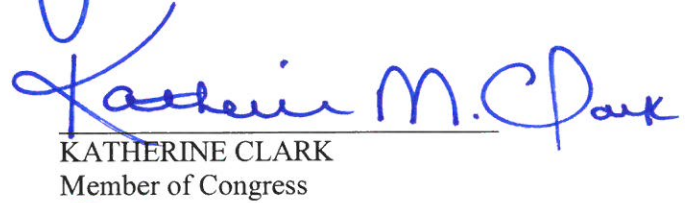


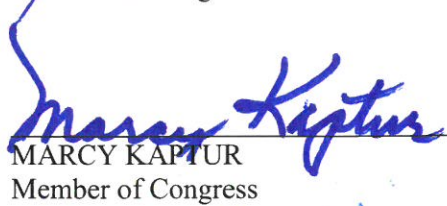
TONY CARDENAS
Member of Congress

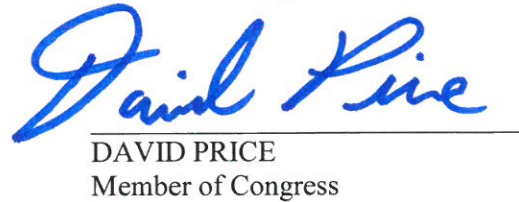

RAUL M. GRIJALVA
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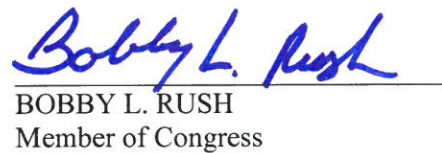

MARCY KAPTUR
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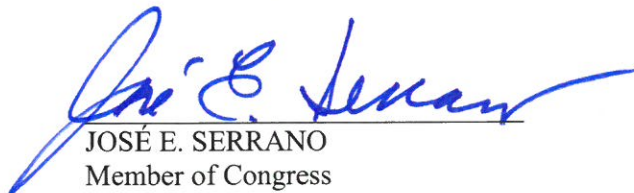

DAVID PRICE
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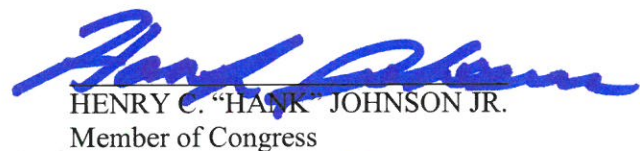

PETER DEFAZIO
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ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
Member of Congress

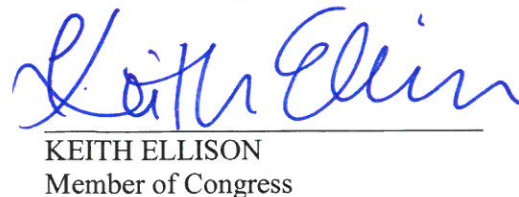

CHELLIE PINGREE
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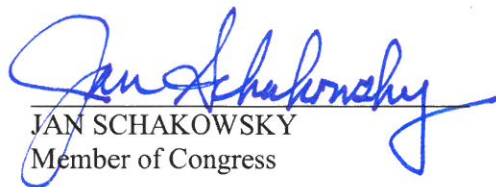

HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON JR.
Member of Congress


BETTY MCCOLLUM
Member of Congress


KEITH ELLISON
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BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

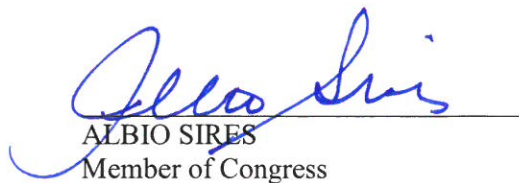

YVETTE D. CLARKE
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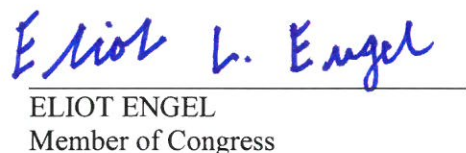
JAN SCHAKOWSKY
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Member of Congress



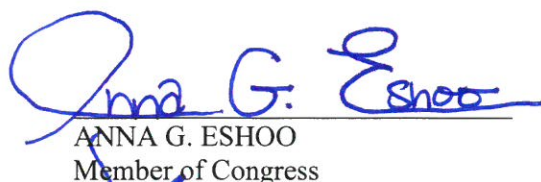
ALBIO SIRES
Member of Congress



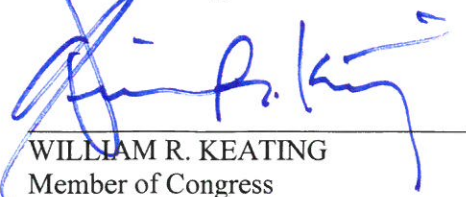
ELIOT ENGEL
Member of Congress



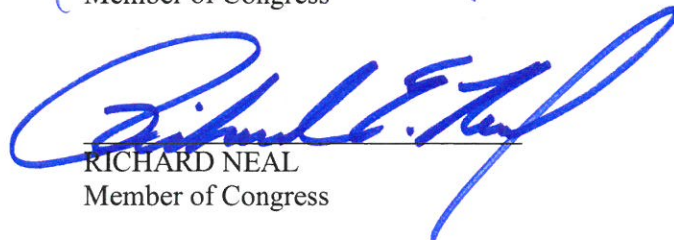
ALAN LOWENTHAL
Member of Congress



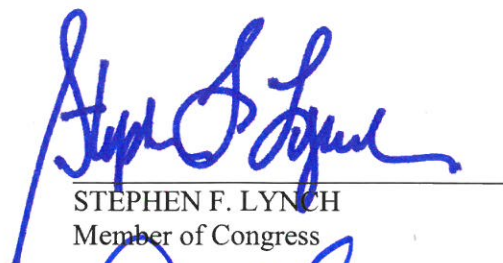
ANNA G. ESHOO
Member of Congress



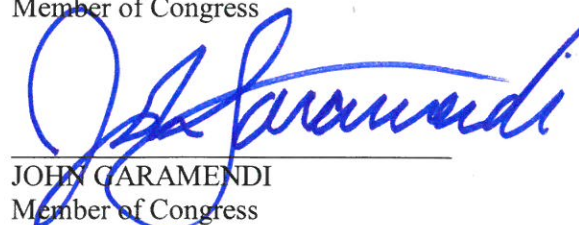
WILLIAM R. KEATING
Member of Congress



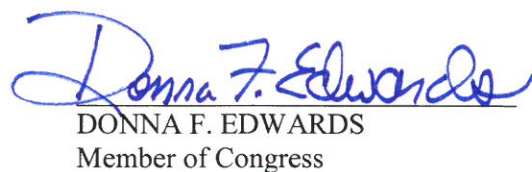
RICHARD NEAL
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STEPHEN F. LYNCH
Member of Congress



JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress



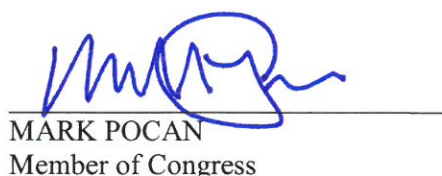
DONNA F. EDWARDS
Member of Congress



PAUL D. TONKO
Member of Congress



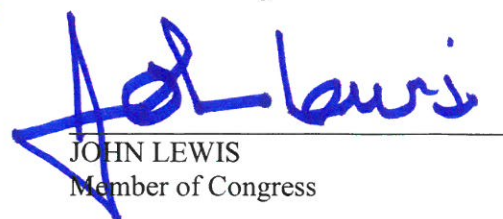
DEBBIE DINGELL
Member of Congress



MARK POCAN
Member of Congress



MARK DESAULNIER
Member of Congress



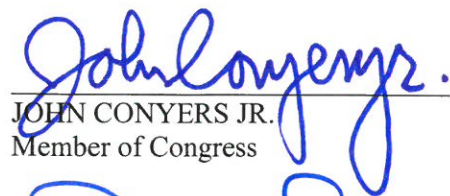
JOHN LEWIS
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JOHN YARMUTH
Member of Congress



NORMA J. TORRES
Member of Congress



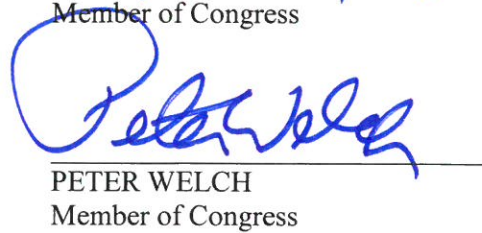
JOHN CONYERS JR.
Member of Congress



ANN KIRKPATRICK
Member of Congress



GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress



PETER WELCH
Member of Congress



KATHY CASTOR
Member of Congress

Cc: Bernard Aronson, Special Envoy to the Colombian Peace Process