

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 29, 2015

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Having recently observed Holocaust Remembrance Day, when communities in the United States and across the world commemorated the more than six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust, we want to express our strong support for the restitution of Jewish communal, private, and heirless property in Central and Eastern Europe.

The unprecedented looting of Jewish assets was a central aspect of the Holocaust. Seventy years after the Holocaust and twenty-five years following the fall of the Iron Curtain, a substantial percentage of formerly Jewish-owned, real properties confiscated by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust have not been returned, nor has compensation been provided to the rightful owners or their heirs.

The Terezin Declaration on Holocaust Era Assets and Related Issues in 2009, which the United States endorsed, affirms that "the protection of property rights is an essential component of a democratic society and the rule of law" and recognizes "the importance of restituting or compensating Holocaust-related confiscations made during the Holocaust era between 1933-45." The Declaration also states "the importance of recovering communal and religious immovable property in reviving and enhancing Jewish life, ensuring its future, assisting the welfare needs of Holocaust (Shoah) survivors, and fostering the preservation of Jewish cultural heritage."

Unfortunately, many nations that endorsed this declaration have not fully addressed the restitution of Jewish communal, private, and heirless property. Poland, home to the largest pre-Holocaust Jewish community, has no law on private property. Other countries, including Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Serbia have yet to fully meet their responsibilities to provide restitution.

We acknowledge that positive steps relating to the restitution of communal, private, and heirless property seized from Jews in some of these and other countries have been achieved, but the progress, for the most part, has been slow at best. Much of that progress is a direct result of the bipartisan support for this issue across Administrations and Congresses. We appreciate your engagement on this issue and the engagement of previous Secretaries of State, as well as the support of our ambassadors across Europe. We also commend the exemplary work of the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, Nicholas Dean, and his predecessors in the Office of Holocaust Issues over the past 15 years, as well as the leadership of the Special Adviser for Holocaust Issues, Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat, all of whom have made the return of Holocaust-era assets to their rightful owners, compensation for wrongs committed during the Holocaust, and Holocaust remembrance a priority of our diplomacy in Europe and around the globe.

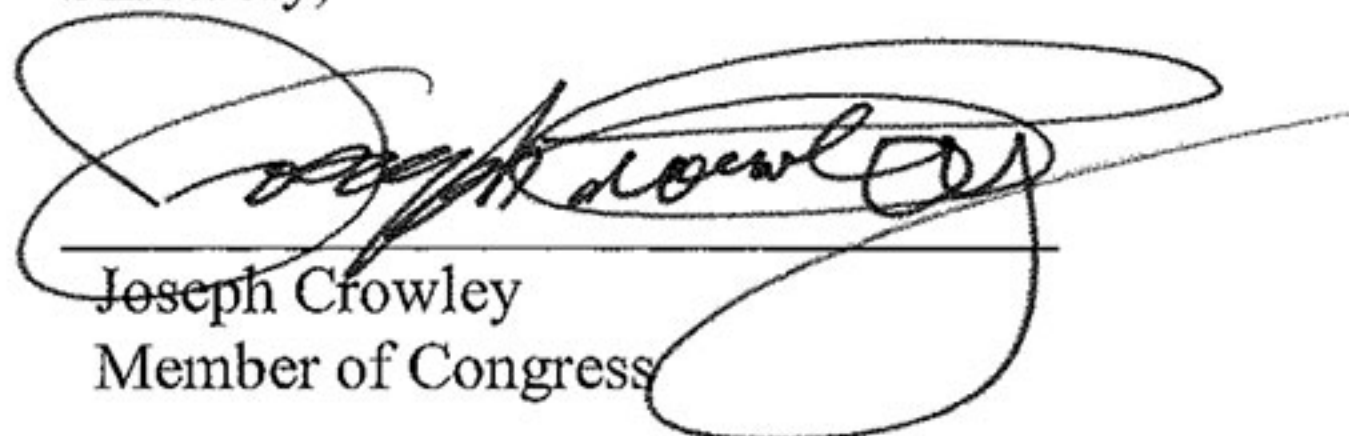
Holocaust victims have waited long enough. Beyond the physical and emotional trauma they suffered 70 years ago, and the impact that trauma continues to have on their lives, many Holocaust survivors in the United States and around the world live in poverty while knowing the property that was stolen from them and their family remains in the hands of governments and private owners who have no rightful claim. The time is now for these governments to pass legislation that ensures a meaningful and expeditious opportunity for property claims to be filed and considered fairly and the property returned or compensated in a timely manner.

As we observe throughout 2015 the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II and the liberation of the concentration camps, we express our commitment to working with you, our ambassadors, and the Office of the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues to meaningfully address property restitution for Holocaust victims with our colleagues in Europe.

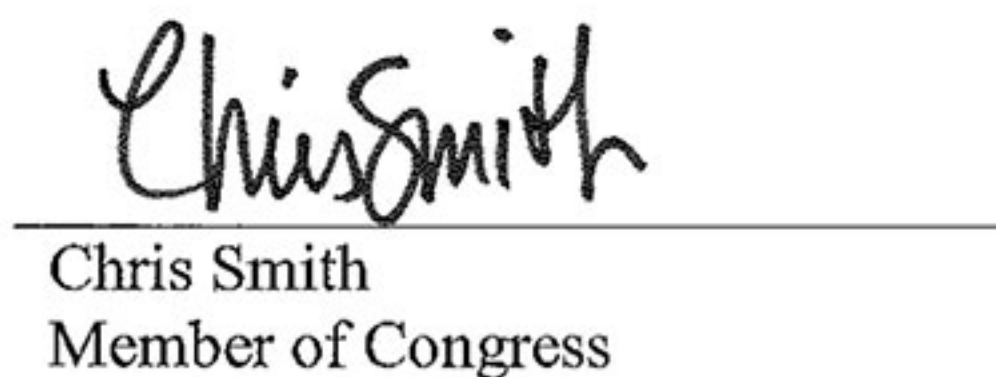
We will continue to make every effort to speak out on this issue and to raise this issue in our interactions with our allies across Europe, and we urge you to do the same to present, together with us, a united voice in support of justice for survivors and their families with no further delay.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



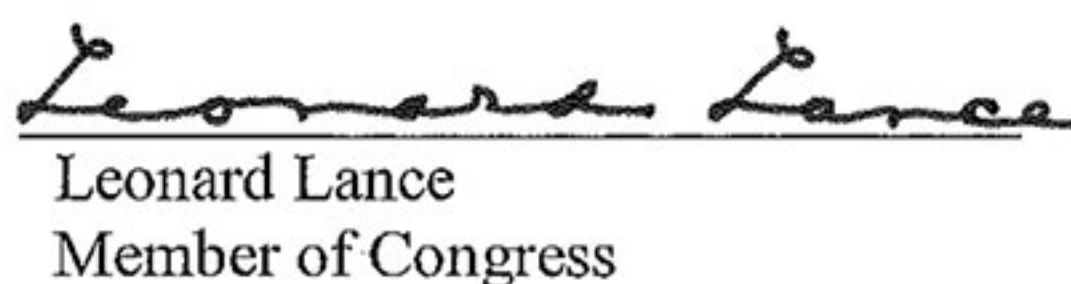
Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress



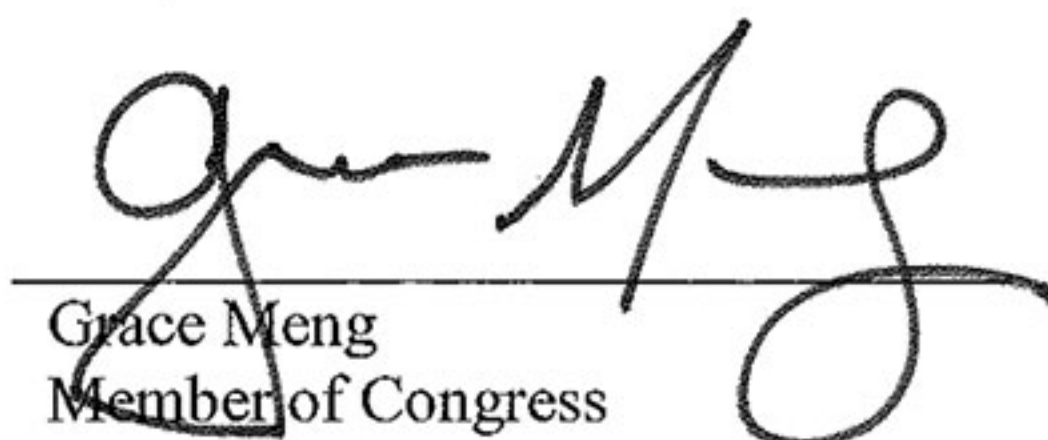
Chris Smith
Member of Congress



Theodore Deutch
Member of Congress



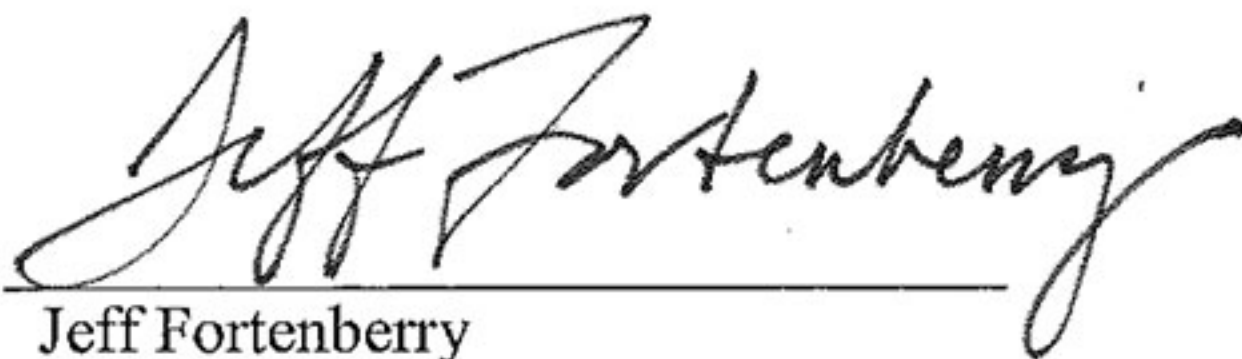
Leonard Lance
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
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Alan Lowenthal
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Jeff Fortenberry
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Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress



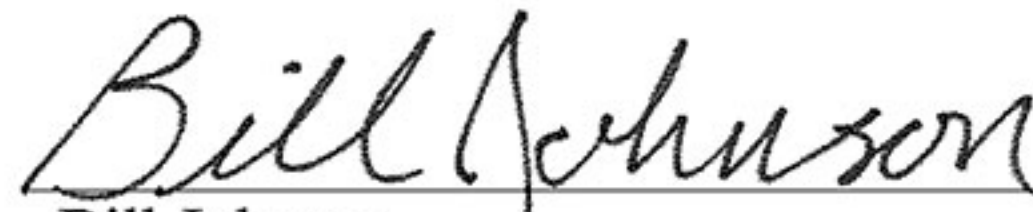
Bob Dold
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Mark DeSaulnier
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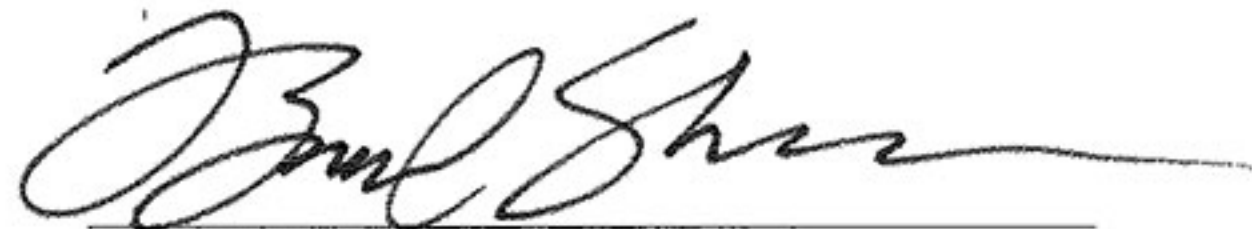
Sean Patrick Maloney
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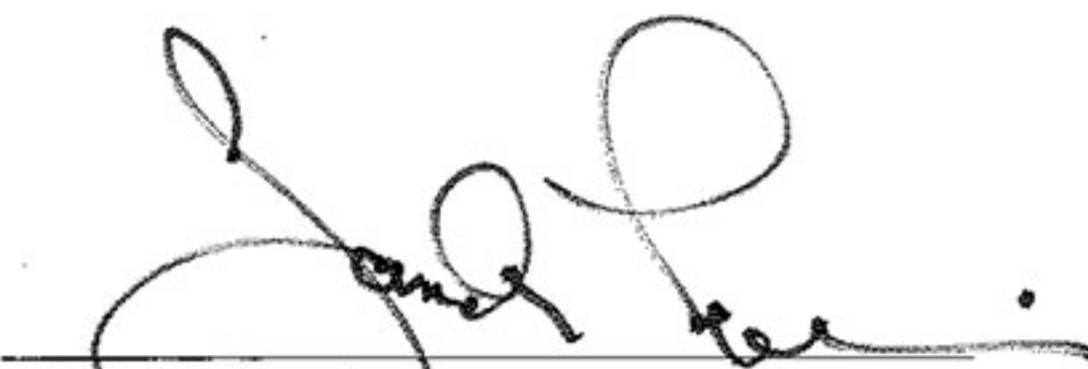
Bill Johnson
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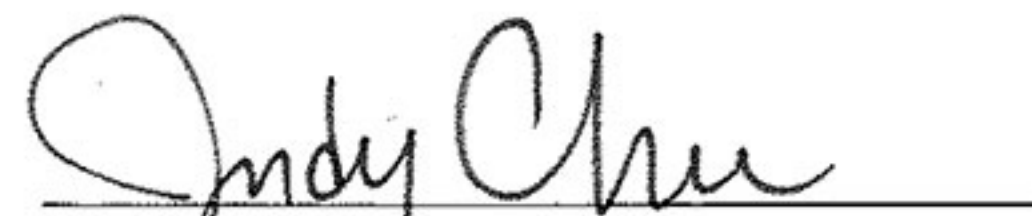
Steve Cohen
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Brad Sherman
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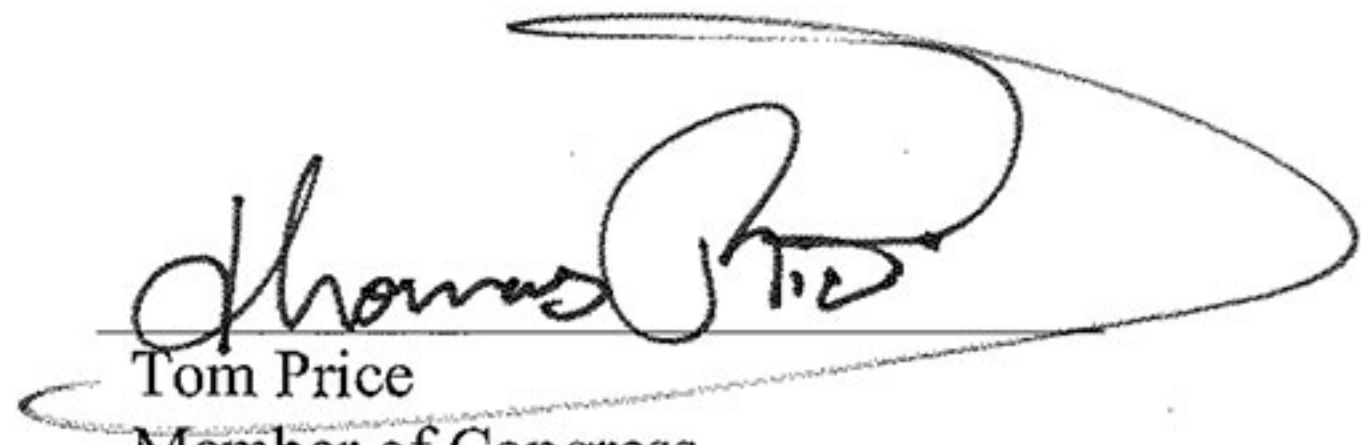
Sander Levin
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Judy Chu
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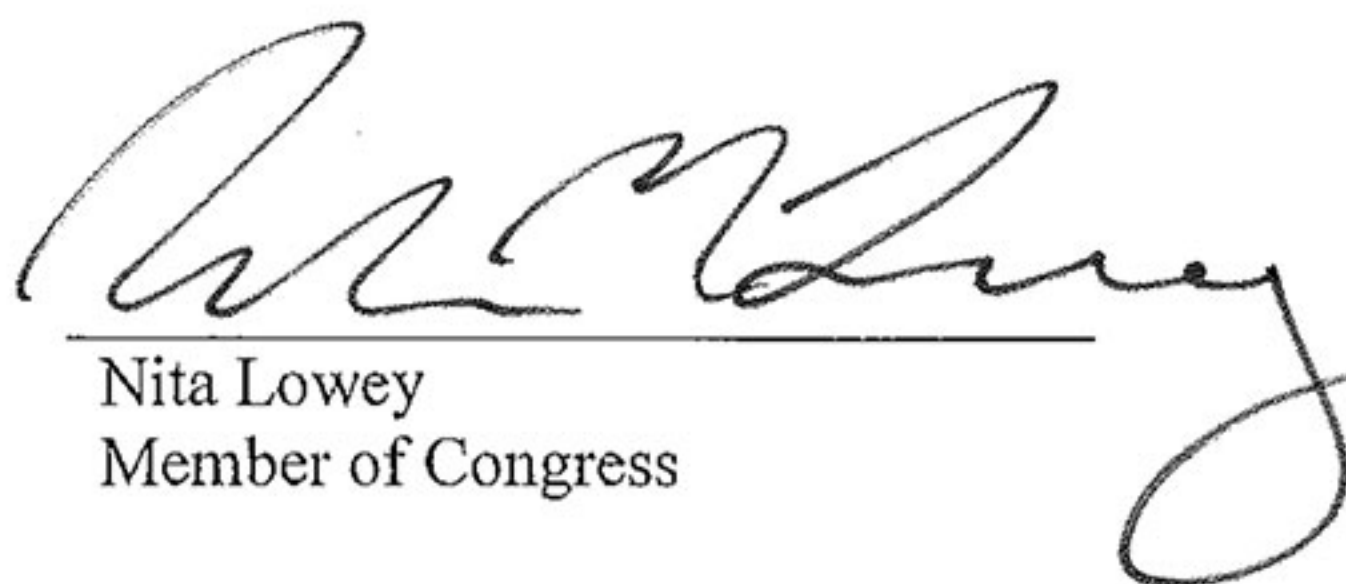
Charles Rangel
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Tom Price
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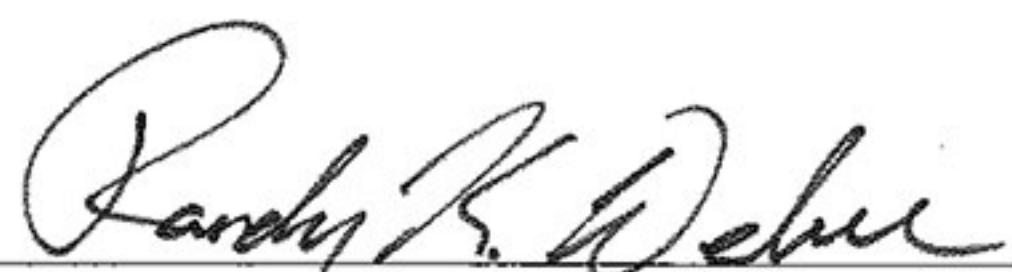
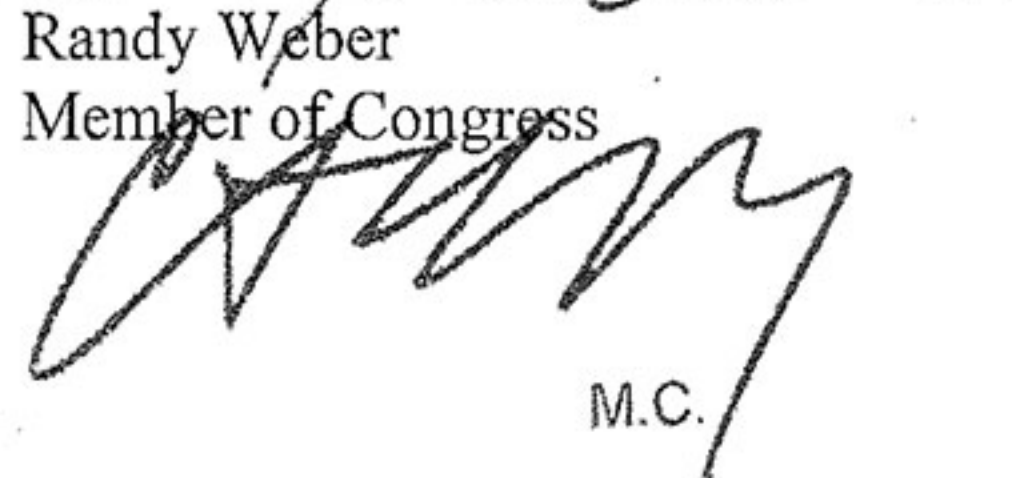

Lee Zeldin
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Nita Lowey
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Trent Franks
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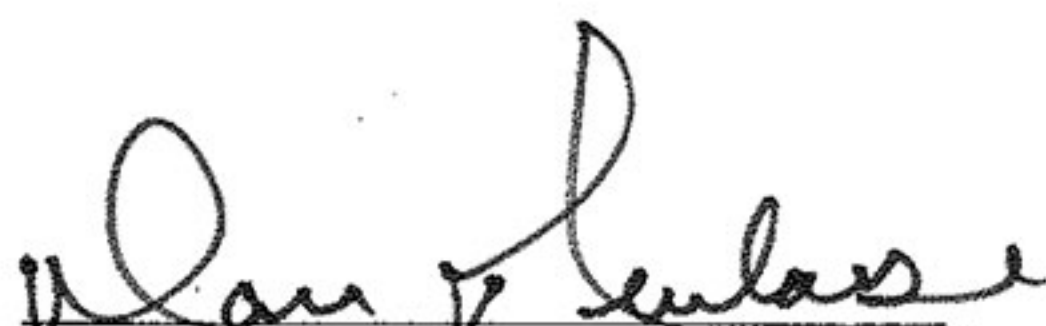

Kathleen Rice
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Randy Weber
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M.C.

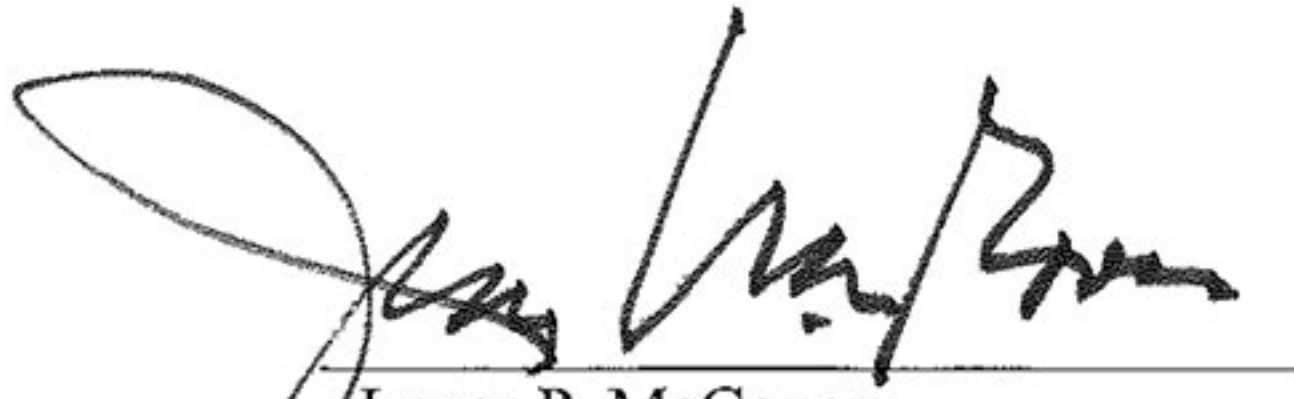
Curt Clawson
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Albio Sires
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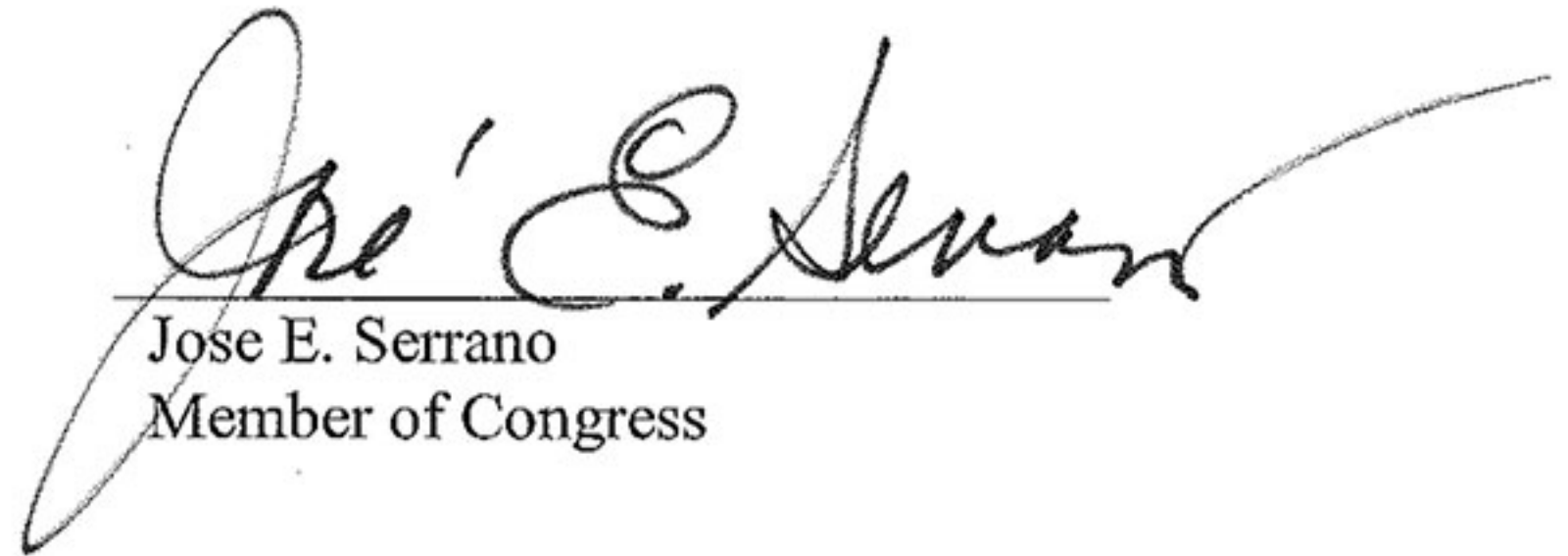
James P. McGovern
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Derek Kilmer
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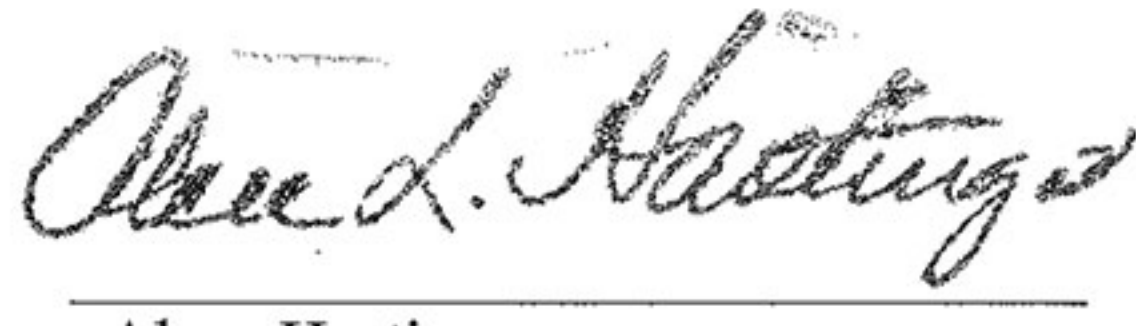
Lois Frankel
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Jose E. Serrano
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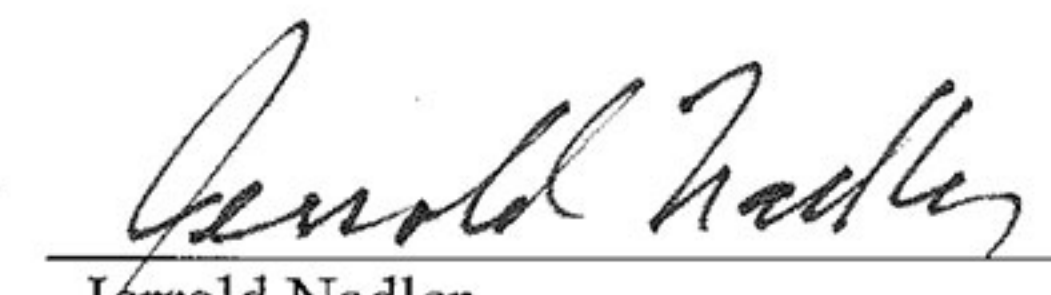
Eric Swalwell
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Alcee Hastings
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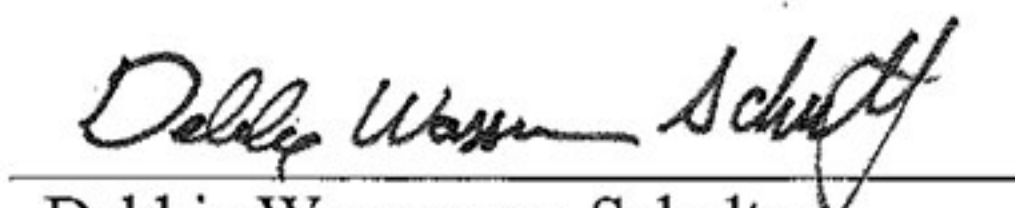
David Cicilline
Member of Congress



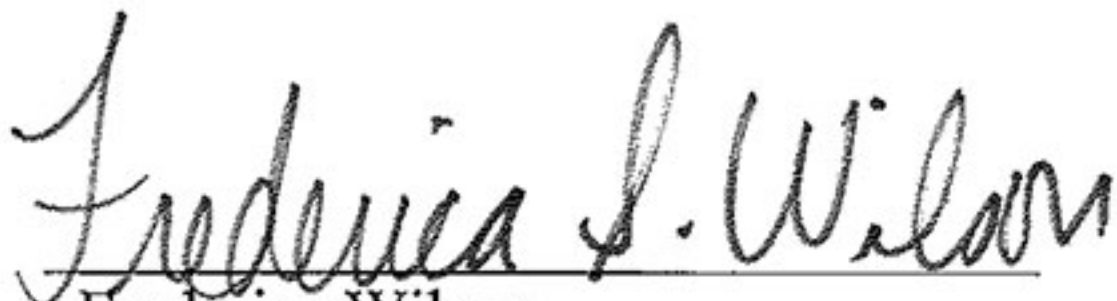
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



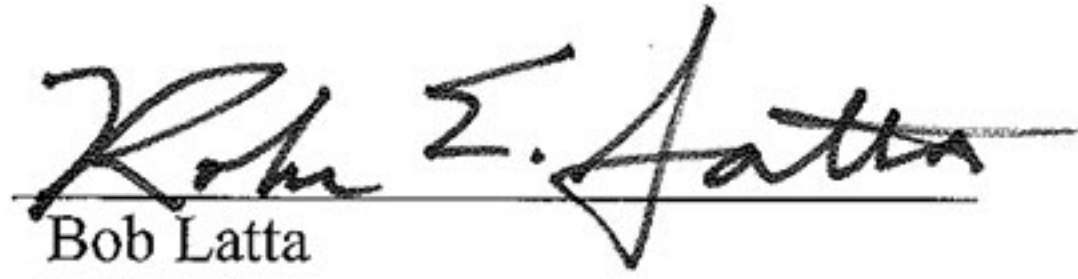
Steve Israel
Member of Congress



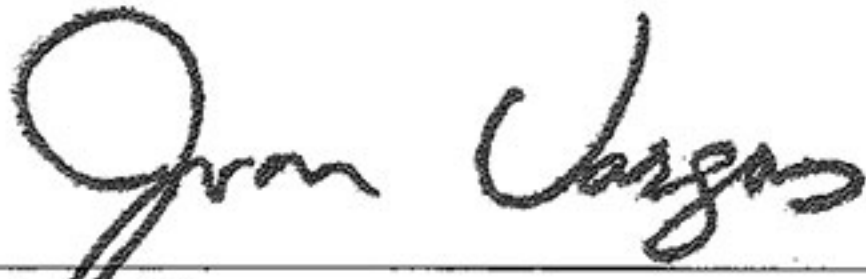
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
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Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress



Bob Latta
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell
Member of Congress



Ron DeSantis
Member of Congress



Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Joseph Biden
Vice President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
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