

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2009

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 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture of key animal welfare laws and to urge you to sustain this effort in Fiscal Year 2010. 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) 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 2010:

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

**We request funding and language to ensure strengthened HMSA enforcement.** We greatly appreciated the committee's inclusion of a \$2 million increase in FY 2009 to begin to address severe shortfalls in the agency's oversight of humane handling rules for animals at slaughter facilities, oversight that is important not only for animal welfare but also for food safety. This problem came sharply into focus last year when egregious abuse of cattle was revealed from a 6-week hidden camera investigation of a plant – which happened to be the #2 beef supplier to the National School Lunch Program and had been honored by USDA as "Supplier of the Year" for the 2004-2005 academic year – leading to the nation's largest meat recall in history. In that case, the blatant and recurrent violations of food safety and humane rules were not reported by 5 USDA inspection personnel at the plant. Subsequent undercover investigations showed the mistreatment was not an isolated case, and a USDA Inspector General's audit identified several serious continuing weaknesses in the inspection regime. We request funding and language to ensure that inspectors are continually observing live animals as they arrive and are offloaded and handled in pens, chutes, and stunning areas, and that USDA officials are taking strong action to avert violations of the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act and the ban on slaughter of cattle too sick or injured to stand and walk. We urge the Committee to make this a high priority in order to better protect consumers and animals.

## **APHIS / Animal Welfare Act (AWA) Enforcement**

**We request \$22,275,270 (near level funding) 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 almost 16,000 sites, including commercial breeding facilities, laboratories, zoos, circuses, and airlines, to ensure compliance with AWA standards. As part of 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 then forced to endure harsh long-distance transport, so that many arrive ill or dead or die soon after being sold to an American family. Animal Care currently has 111 inspectors (with 5 vacancies in the process of being filled), compared to 64 inspectors at the end of the 1990s. An appropriation at the requested level would maintain FY09 funding with a modest increase to cover pay costs and additional responsibilities associated with the new import ban and the increasing number of licensed/registered facilities.

### APHIS / Investigative and Enforcement Services

**We request \$14,036,350 (near level funding) 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 \$87,910,150 (near level funding) 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, in the wake of the high-profile Michael Vick dogfighting case. 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.

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

**We request \$5,000,000 to continue the implementation of the National Veterinary Medical Service Act (P.L. 108-161), specifically authorized in 2003.** This program received \$2,950,000 in FY 2009, 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 \$120,000 on average, with an average starting salary of \$61,000. 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 \$1,001,000 (level funding) 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 will be used for staff time and resources to support state and local governments' and humane organizations' efforts to plan for protection of people with

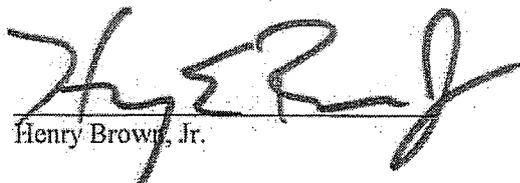
animals. The additional resources will enable the agency to participate, in partnership with FEMA, in the National Response Plan without jeopardizing other Animal Care programs.

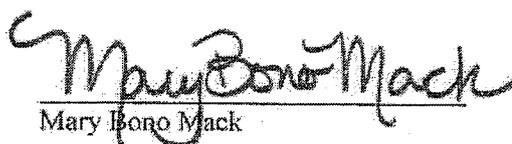
Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We will be grateful for your leadership in ensuring that funds necessary to protect both animals and people will continue to be available.

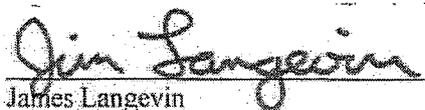
Sincerely,

  
Earl Blumenauer

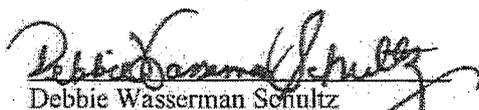
  
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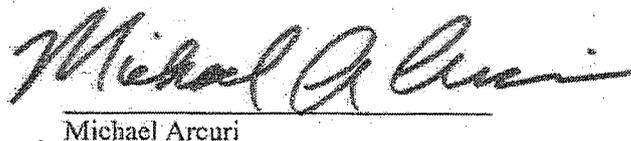
  
Henry Brown, Jr.

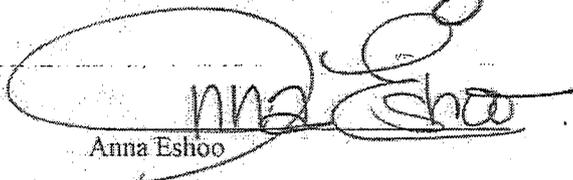
  
Mary Bono Mack

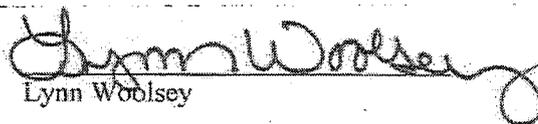
  
James Langevin

  
Leonard Lance

  
Debbie Wasserman Schultz

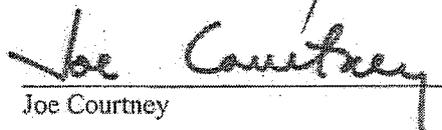
  
Michael Arcuri

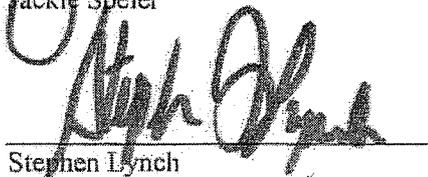
  
Anna Eshoo

  
Lynn Woolsey

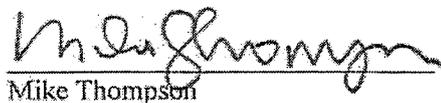
  
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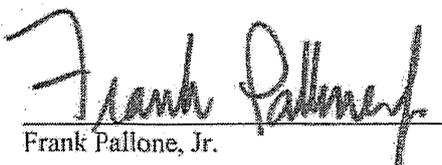
  
Jackie Speier

  
Joe Courtney

  
Stephen Lynch

  
Doris Matsui

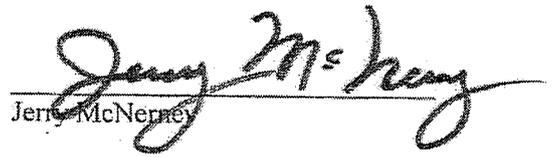
  
Mike Thompson

  
Frank Pallone, Jr.

  
Charles Gonzalez



Jim Gerlach



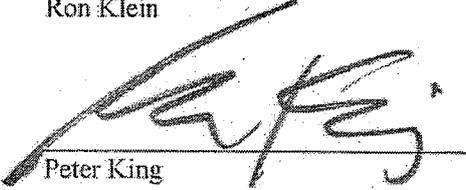
Jerry McNerney



Ron Klein



Allyson Schwartz



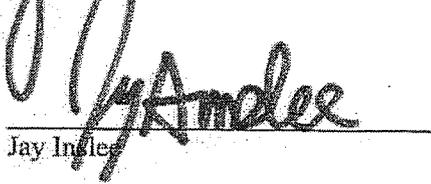
Peter King



John Lewis



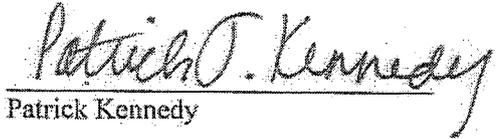
Mike Doyle



Jay Inslee



Shelley Berkley



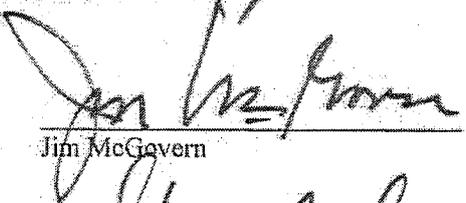
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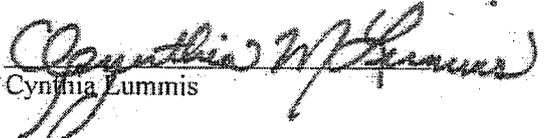
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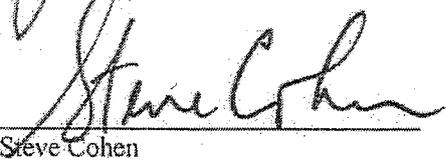
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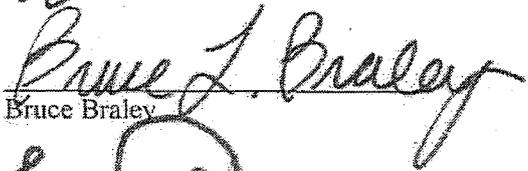
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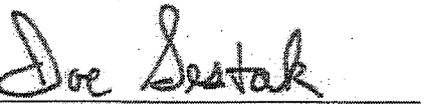
Cynthia Lummis



Steve Cohen



Bruce Braley



Joe Sestak



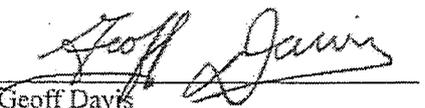
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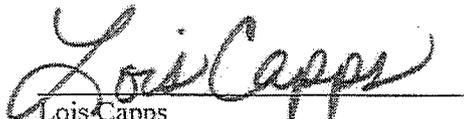
Judy Biggert



Jim McDermott



Geoff Davis



Lois Capps

Brad Miller  
Brad Miller

Gary Peters  
Gary Peters

Eric Massa  
Eric Massa

Rush Holt  
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John Hall  
John Hall

Pedro Pierluisi  
Pedro Pierluisi

David Loeb sack  
David Loeb sack

Michael N. Castle  
Michael Castle

Sander Levin  
Sander Levin

Mary Jo Kilroy  
Mary Jo Kilroy

Paul Hodes  
Paul Hodes

Nick Rahall II  
Nick Rahall II

Carol Shea-Porter  
Carol Shea-Porter

Peter Welch  
Peter Welch

Michael Capuano  
Michael Capuano

Raul Grijalva  
Raul Grijalva

Neil Abercrombie  
Neil Abercrombie

Mazie Hirono  
Mazie Hirono

Susan Davis  
Susan Davis

Niki Tsongas  
Niki Tsongas

Patrick Murphy  
Patrick Murphy

Christopher Van Hollen, Jr.  
Christopher Van Hollen, Jr.

Russ Carnahan  
Russ Carnahan

Michael Honda  
Michael Honda

Betty Sutton  
Betty Sutton

Michael H. Michaud  
Michael Michaud

Dennis Moore  
Dennis Moore

Dave Reichert  
Dave Reichert

Anthony Weiner  
Anthony Weiner

Dale Kildee  
Dale Kildee

Edward Markey  
Edward Markey

Sheila Jackson Lee  
Sheila Jackson Lee

Eliot Engel  
Eliot Engel

Henry Waxman  
Henry Waxman

George Miller  
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Richard Neal  
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Vic Snyder  
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Howard Berman

Elijah Cummings  
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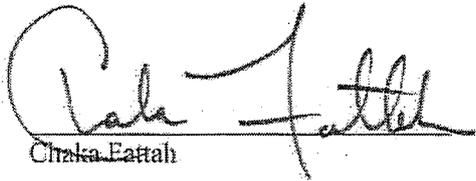
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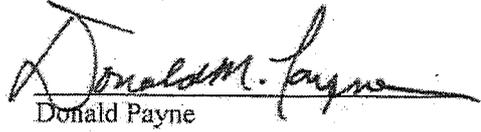
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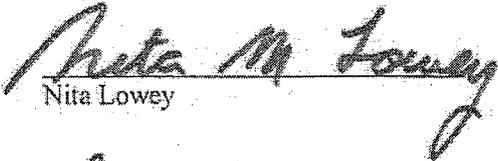
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Barney Frank

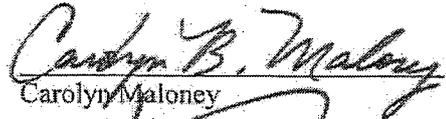
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Luis Gutierrez

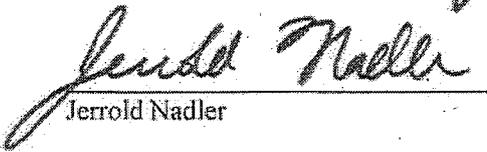
  
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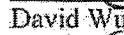
  
Bart Gordon

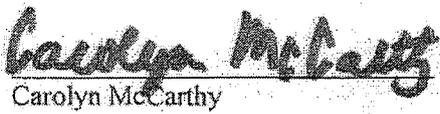
  
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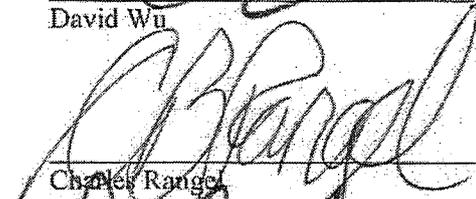
  
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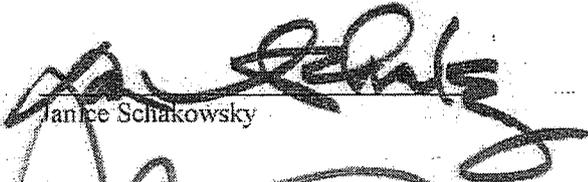
  
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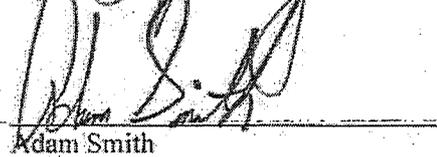
  
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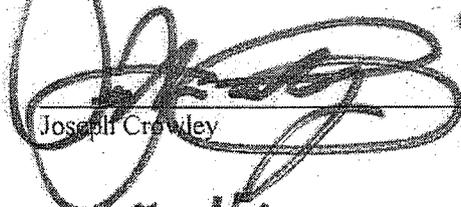
  
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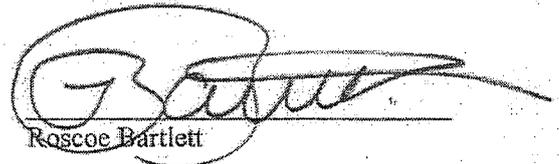
  
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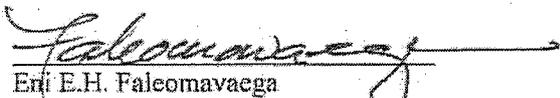
  
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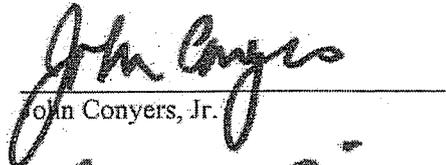
  
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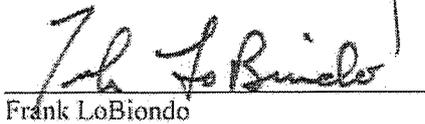
  
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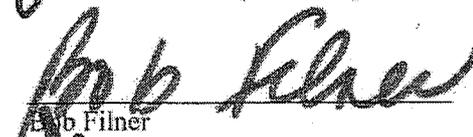
  
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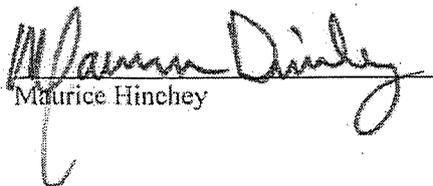
  
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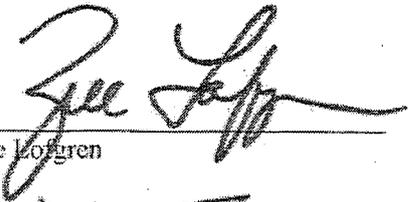
  
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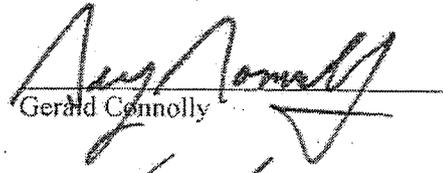
  
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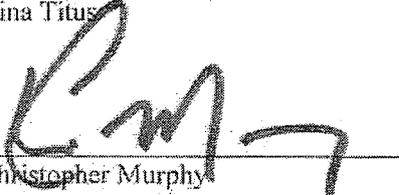
  
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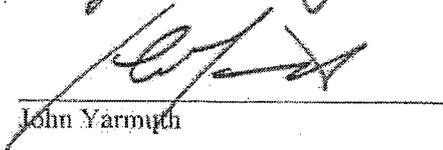
  
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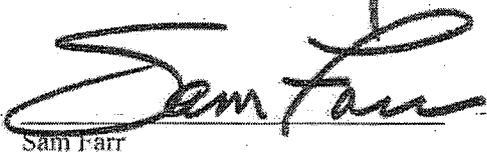
  
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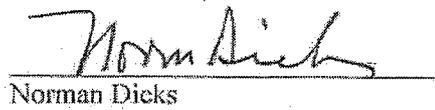
  
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Gerald Connolly

  
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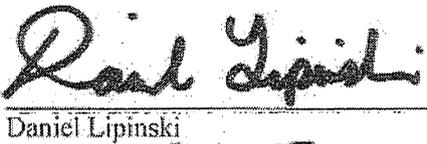
  
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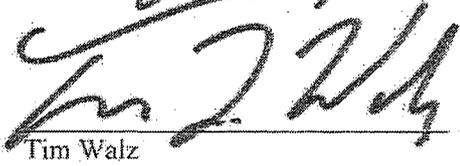
  
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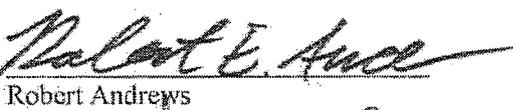
  
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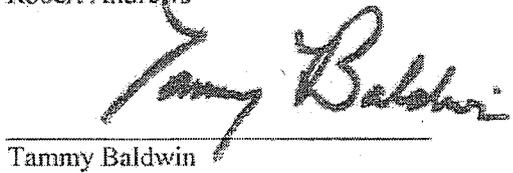
  
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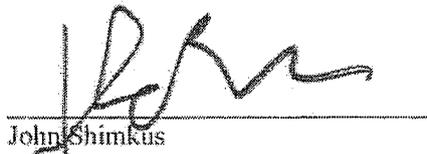
  
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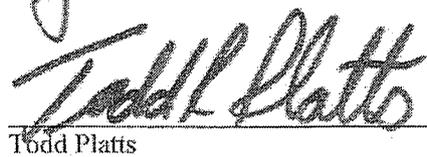
  
Dennis Kucinich

  
Tammy Baldwin

  
Adam Schiff

  
John Shimkus

  
C. A. "Dutch" Ruppberger

  
Todd Platts

  
Steve Israel

*Ellen Tauscher*

Ellen Tauscher

*Bill Pascrell Jr*

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

*John Sarbanes*

John Sarbanes

*Diana DeGette*

Diana DeGette

*Gwen Moore*

Gwen Moore

*Dan Burton*

Dan Burton