

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 3, 2015

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Bernard Aronson
Special Envoy on Colombia
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry and Special Envoy Aronson,

We write to express our strong support for the on-going peace process in Colombia and for your efforts to provide timely support to the negotiations and the critical initial phases of implementation, should a peace accord be concluded in the coming months. We also ask that you share this letter with the two negotiating teams in Havana so that they are also aware of our support and the issues we outline below. We believe the commitment by the government and guerrilla negotiating teams to accelerate the timeline and conclude the negotiations in the coming months is an important and welcome decision.

We were very concerned over the escalation of hostilities that took place between late May and early July. It is clear that both sides in the armed conflict are still capable of inflicting harm on each other. However, it is the Colombian people – and especially rural, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities – who suffer the most from such continued acts of violence and sabotage. It is for these communities that we express our greatest concern and solidarity. Colombia does not need to add more victims to the toll accrued over half a century. We therefore welcome the recent announcement by the Government and the FARC to negotiate a bilateral ceasefire agreement on an accelerated timeline and end the violence that so afflicts communities throughout Colombia. We also believe this will help create confidence in the ability of the negotiating parties to reach a final agreement in the coming months. We further support the work the two parties have been carrying out together to begin demining territory contaminated by anti-personnel landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices. These concrete collaborations improve the lives of civilians living in or near these areas and demonstrate the potential for peacebuilding.

We recognize that the remaining agenda items under negotiation, which deal with victims of the conflict, transitional justice and ending the conflict, are complex and difficult. We urge you to convey to the negotiating parties our encouragement that these final agreements be *inclusive*, in particular to the views, needs and priorities of sectors of Colombian society that have been most affected by the conflict, yet also most excluded from decisions on how to repair the social, economic, political, community, familial, emotional and psychological damage they suffer. In particular, we emphasize the direct engagement and involvement of women, Afro-Colombians, Indigenous Peoples, campesino organizations and the internally displaced in the review of these chapters before they are finalized. These sectors will carry the greatest burden in the effort to reinforce and restore peace, reconciliation and reconstruction. There should be a

space for them at the table to determine whether the accords genuinely respond to their needs, hopes, priorities and capacities.

We also urge that the rights and needs of *victims* take center stage. In matters of transitional justice, we expressly urge that there be strong and verifiable mechanisms to ensure that victims are guaranteed the right to the truth, reparations and justice, as well as the critical commitment that such acts of violence will not be repeated in the future. We also wish to express, in the strongest possible terms, our concern that the final accord not contribute to Colombia's long and tragic history of *impunity*. It is not our place, nor do we intend to impose upon the negotiators what might be the best system or combination of sanctions, punishments, deprivation of liberty or alternative sentencing. We strongly believe, however, that they must break, not reinforce, Colombia's culture of impunity. Indeed, ending impunity is fundamental to ensuring the guarantee of no repetition.

Secretary Kerry and Special Envoy Aronson, we respectfully ask that you convey our support for the peace process and the matters outlined in this letter to President Juan Manuel Santos, the members of the Colombian government and FARC negotiating teams in Havana, Cuba, and to any other key officials within the Colombian government you believe might be interested. Please know that you can count on our continued support as the peace negotiations continue and, hopefully, conclude successfully in the coming months.

Sincerely,



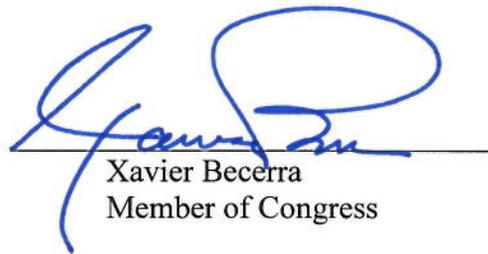
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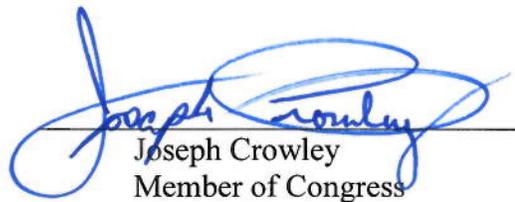
Eliot L. Engel
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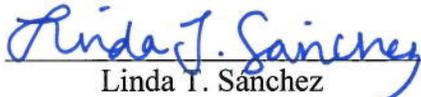
Xavier Becerra
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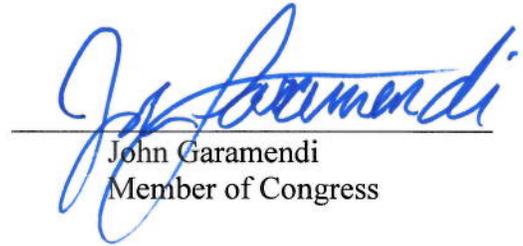


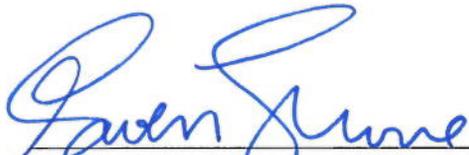
Joseph Crowley
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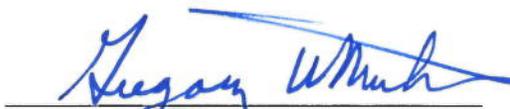

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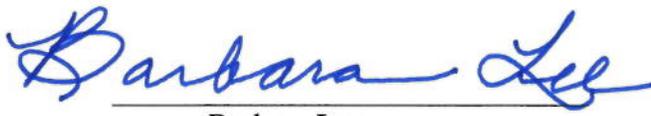

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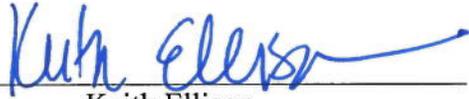

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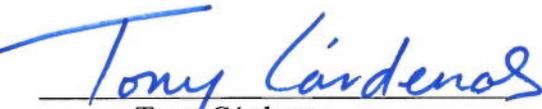

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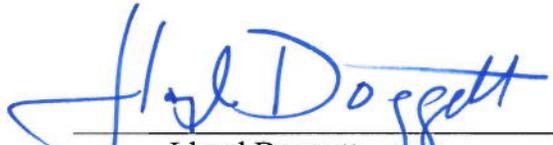

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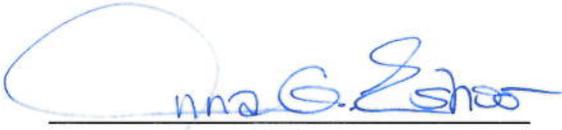

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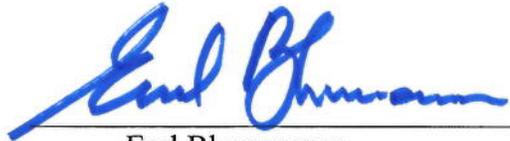

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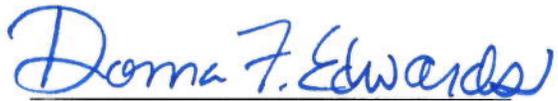
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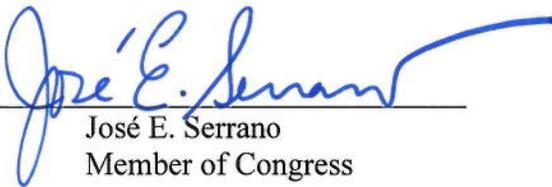
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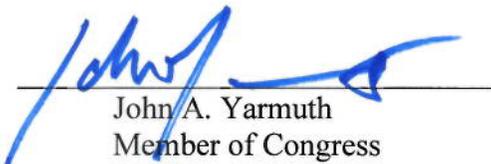
Donna F. Edwards
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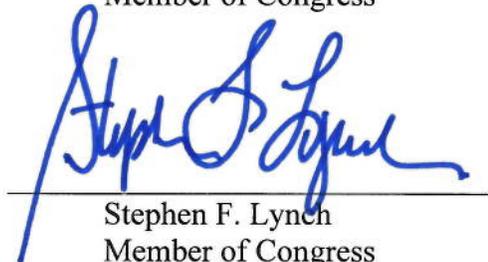
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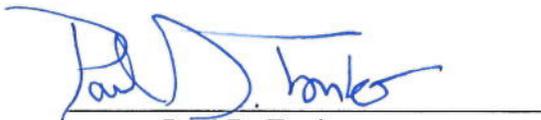
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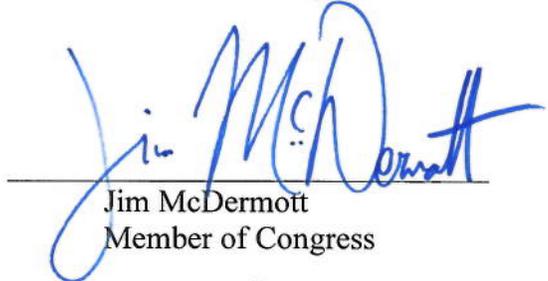
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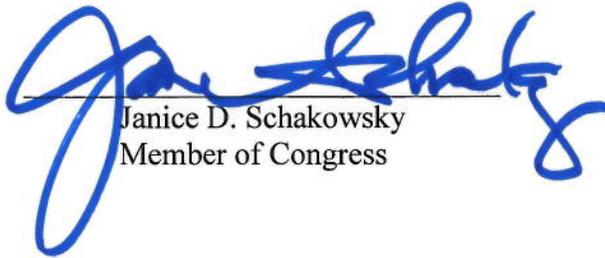
Jim McDermott
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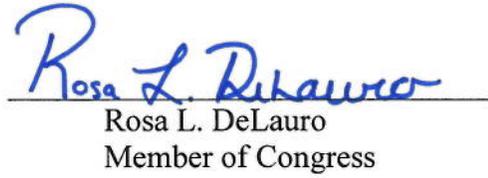
Dina Titus
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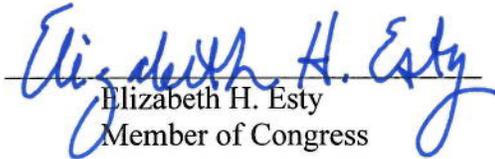
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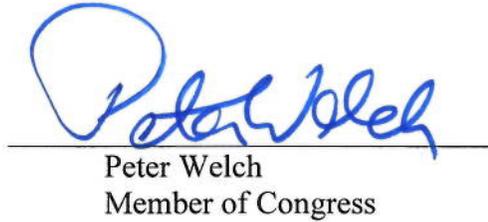
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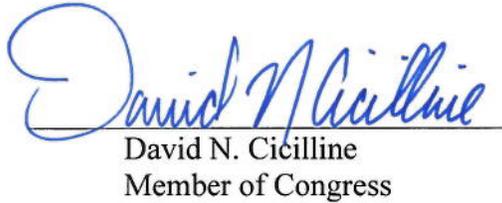
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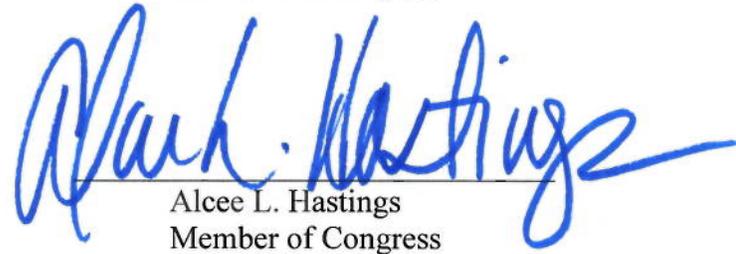
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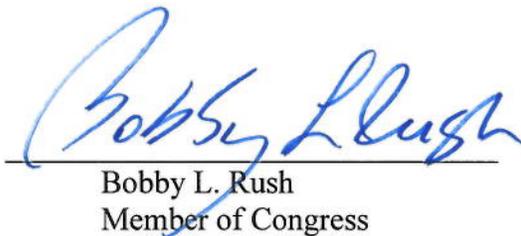
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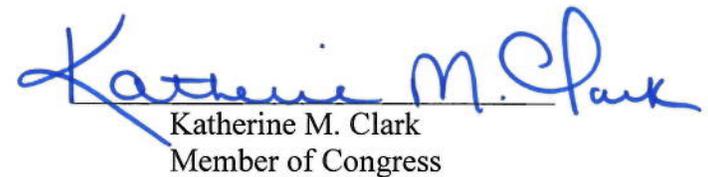
Niki Tsongas
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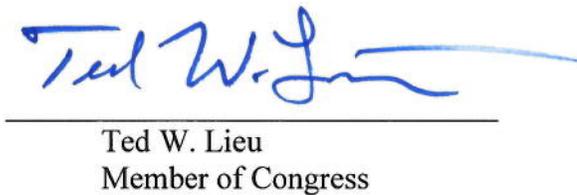
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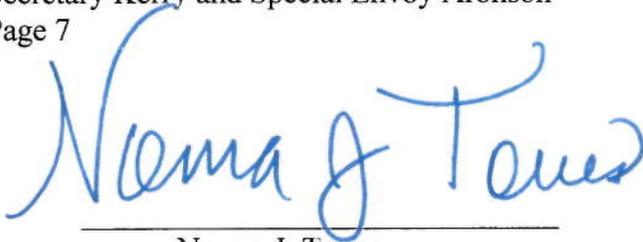
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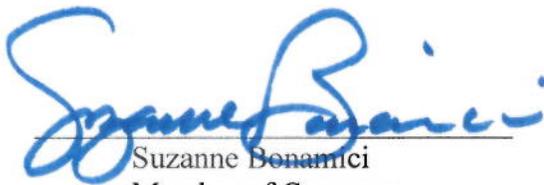
Yvette D. Clarke
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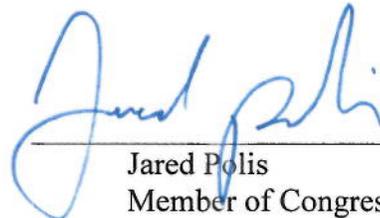
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