

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 2, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We were very pleased to learn that you have extended an invitation to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos to come and meet with you here in Washington, D.C. during the first week of February. We strongly encourage you to use this opportunity not only to reinforce our past alliance, but to emphasize how the United States intends to provide immediate and on-going support for the implementation of Colombia's peace accords, should negotiations conclude successfully in the near future.

As you well know, Colombia is at a hopeful but critical juncture. The current peace negotiations offer the possibility that decades of internal armed conflict may be brought to an end. But the signing of agreements will only be the beginning of the process of constructing a durable peace. As often noted, implementing the peace accords and establishing the conditions under which peace and reconciliation might take hold will be a significant and long term undertaking. We believe the United States, which provided so much funding and support for Plan Colombia, needs to demonstrate that same commitment to the peace.

We also urge you to take this opportunity to raise some of the many serious human rights issues that continue to afflict Colombia. Specifically, we urge you to raise with President Santos your deep concern regarding the increase in murders and threats against human rights defenders, labor activists, community leaders, journalists, and Afro-Colombian and indigenous leaders. These leaders are the very human capital that Colombia needs so desperately to consolidate, expand and implement the peace, reconciliation and national reconstruction promises embodied in the peace accords. Yet at the same time that the homicide rate overall in Colombia is declining, threats against and murders of these human rights leaders have increased.

In addition, it will be critical for Colombian civil society – especially those vulnerable communities that have been victims of violence – to have confidence in the country's criminal justice system and be reassured that all of Colombia's institutions, including the military, are dedicated to assisting victims, uncovering the truth, and ensuring that violence will not be perpetrated on them again. These are fundamental elements of the peace agreements under negotiation.

In this light, we are gravely concerned by the Ministry of Defense's recent announcement to nominate for promotion to the rank of general, or to attend special military courses in preparation for such a promotion, several military officers who are under investigation by the Attorney General's Office for possible involvement extrajudicial murders. Before granting these officers such a highly valued promotion, Colombia's criminal justice system should be allowed to complete its investigations into these cases and either exonerate or indict those accused as the evidence warrants.

Mr. President, please know that we support the Colombian negotiations that seek to end over five decades of conflict that has deeply wounded all sectors of Colombian society. We urge you to provide robust and concrete support to implementing the peace accords, and to express continuing concern regarding the security and ability of human rights defenders to carry out their vital work. Finally, when discussing how to advance the best practices and values of the Colombian armed forces as it prepares to take up new responsibilities in a post-conflict society, we urge you to emphasize the need for the Colombian criminal justice system to work its will before rewarding with promotions military officers under investigation for allegations of serious human rights crimes.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of these requests. We look forward to the visit by President Santos and your conversations with him about the future of U.S.-Colombian relations.

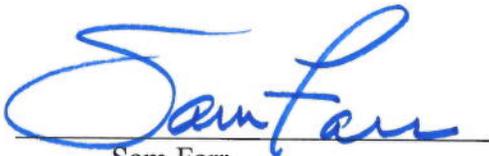
Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Joseph R. Pitts
Member of Congress



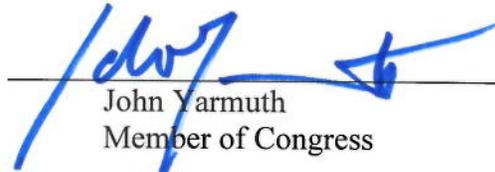
Sam Farr
Member of Congress



John Lewis
Member of Congress

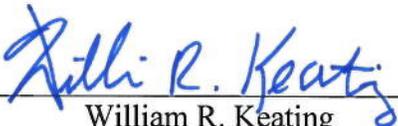


Dina Titus
Member of Congress



John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

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Support for Colombia Peace Process

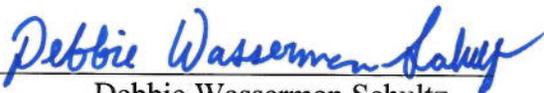

William R. Keating
Member of Congress


Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

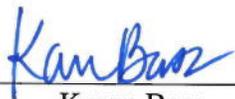

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

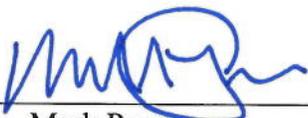

Alan Grayson
Member of Congress


Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

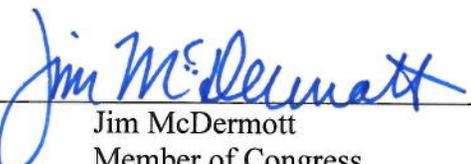

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress


Alan S. Lowenthal
Member of Congress


Karen Bass
Member of Congress


Mark Pocan
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Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress

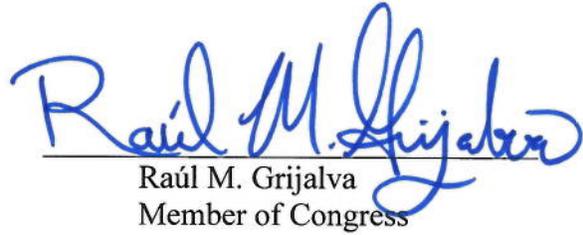

Jim McDermott
Member of Congress


Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress

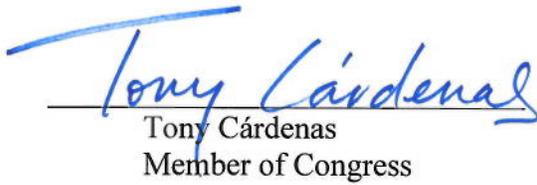
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Jared Polis
Member of Congress



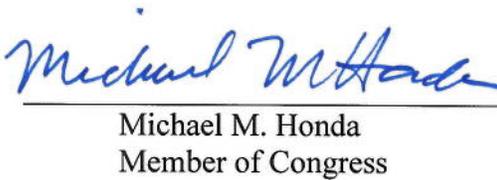
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



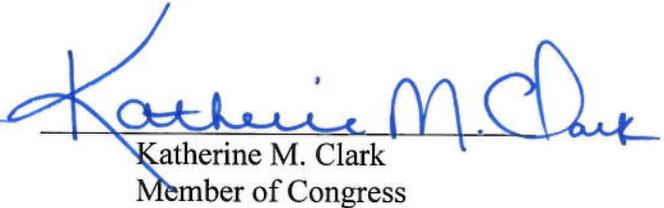
Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



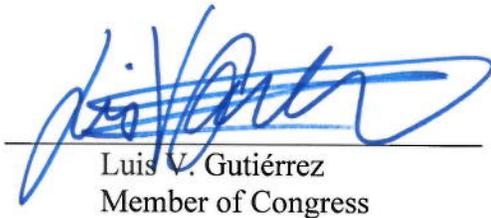
John B. Larson
Member of Congress



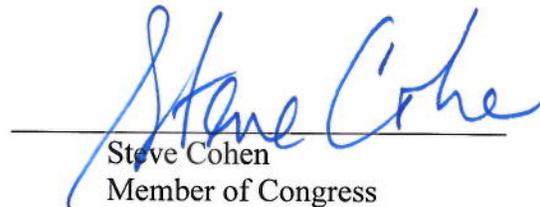
Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress



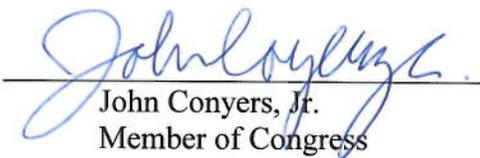
Katherine M. Clark
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress



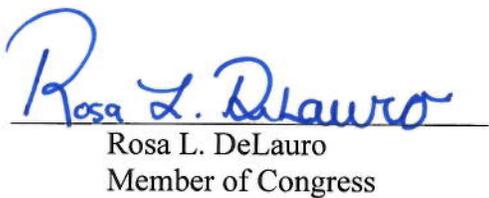
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



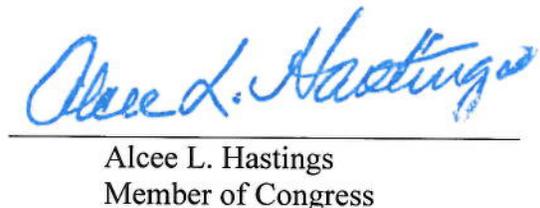
John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress

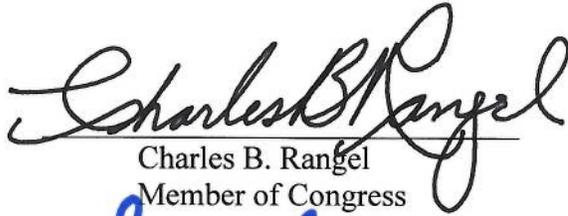


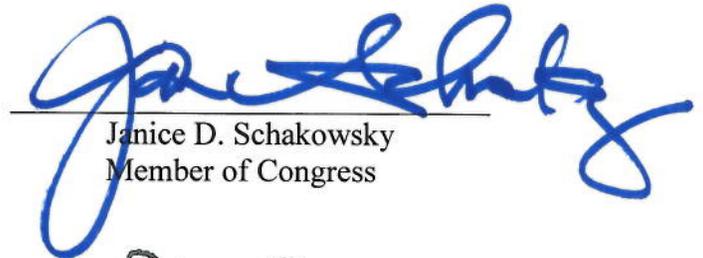
Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

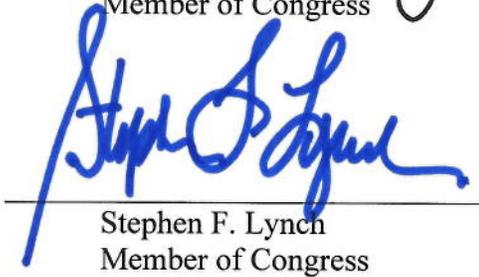


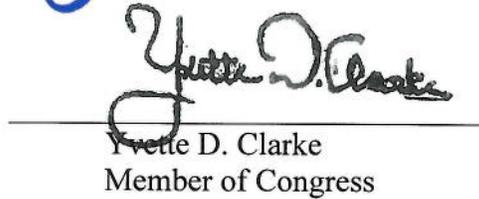
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

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Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress

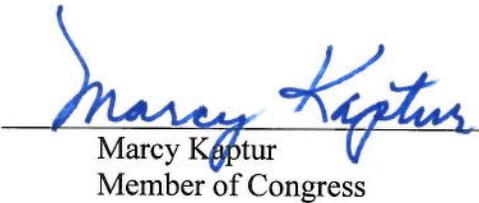

Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress


Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

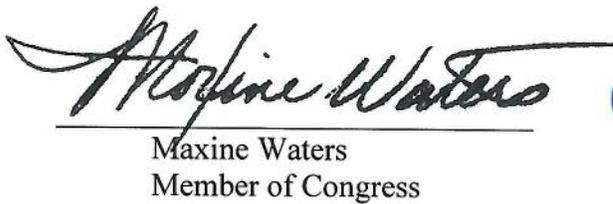

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress


Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress


Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress


Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress


Barbara Lee
Member of Congress


Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

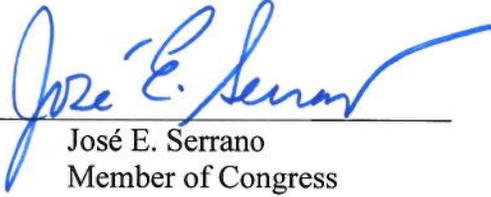

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

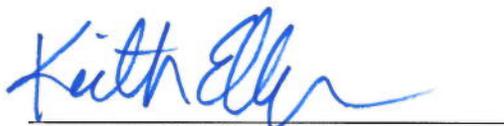

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

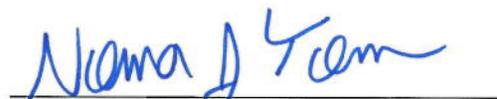

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

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Support for the Colombian Peace Process


Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress


José E. Serrano
Member of Congress


Keith Ellison
Member of Congress


Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress


Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress


Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress


Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

And S. Z...

Miki K...

Command.

Leese Slaughter

Sammy K. Davis

Bob Wells

Joe King

Mike J. King
CA-38

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Signatures on Page 7:

Anna G. Eshoo
Niki Tsongas
John Garamendi
Louise M. Slaughter
Danny K. Davis
Peter Welch
Joseph P. Kennedy III
Linda T. Sánchez