

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 23, 2007

The Honorable Mike Capuano, Chairman
Special Task Force on Ethics Enforcement
1530 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Capuano,

We applaud and appreciate your leadership on the Special Task Force on Ethics Enforcement. We encourage you, along with the other Task Force members, to support important changes in the current House ethics process that will increase its efficacy and credibility with the American people. Key to achieving those goals, in our view, is building increased independence and professionalism into the enforcement process.

In poll after poll conducted recently, the citizens of the United States cited corruption as a top concern. This issue, in part, fueled the changes in the 110th Congress. Those of us who serve in this Congress are convinced there is both a responsibility and an opportunity, especially as members of the new majority, to respond to this concern.

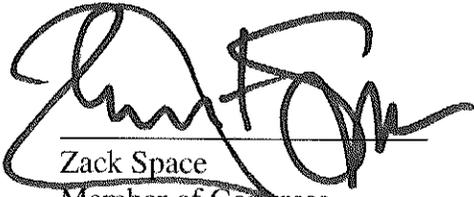
The new rules passed in the opening days of the session sent the powerful message that Congress intends to change the way it conducts its business. With those actions, we made an historic down payment on restoring public confidence in the integrity of Congress.

Central to fulfilling the promises we made as a Caucus is making improvements in the House's ethics enforcement process, regardless of who serves on the Committee on Standard of Official Conduct. We made significant progress in this area, but we still have much work to do. Simply put, we need to address the structural flaws that underlie the current enforcement process. Through no fault of the honorable men and women who serve on the Ethics Committee, they often are placed in an untenable position. Under the current system, there are too many built-in conflicts of interest. At the same time, Members alone are allowed to file complaints against other Members. These Members are our friends and colleagues whom we rely upon to move legislation or for support of public policy goals. Also, there is very limited disclosure of the Committee actions, which encourages public distrust.

Our current ethics process is also out of step with how these matters are handled in almost half the state legislatures. The experience in the states has proven that effective safeguards can be put in place to deter potential abuse of the ethics process without undermining its integrity and free of any constitutional concerns. Under such a revamped ethics process, final determination of any alleged ethical misconduct would remain the responsibility of the Members, as is constitutionally required. **We believe that building greater independence into the ethics enforcement process, especially in the investigatory phase, is an appropriate response to the problems of the past and will be a safeguard against any recurrences.**

We are sensitive to the great difficulty of your task and the institutional resistance to making changes in this area. Nonetheless, meaningful and effective changes to the ethics process are essential to demonstrate that the 110th Congress intends to keep its promises. We urge you to resist efforts to recommend changes that fail to address the fundamental problems of the current ethics process. We look forward to supporting changes that will inject the needed independence into ethics oversight for Congress. We look forward to working with you on these changes.

Sincerely,



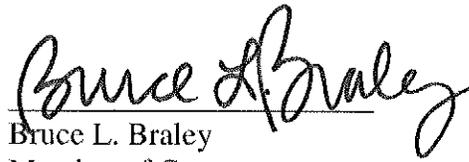
Zack Space
Member of Congress



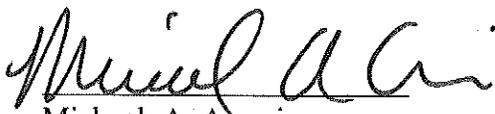
Baron P. Hill
Member of Congress



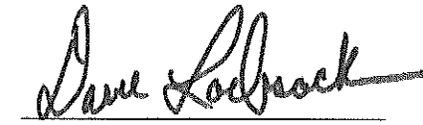
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Bruce L. Braley
Member of Congress



Michael A. Arcuri
Member of Congress



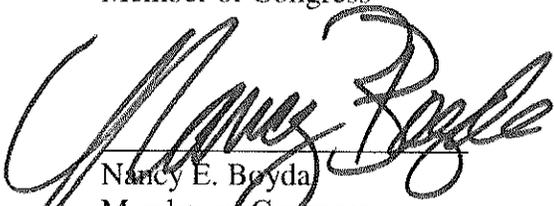
David Loeb sack
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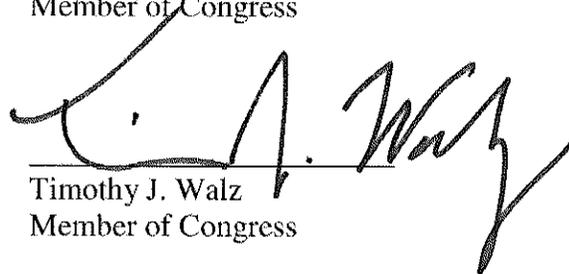
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Ed Perlmutter
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Nancy E. Boyd
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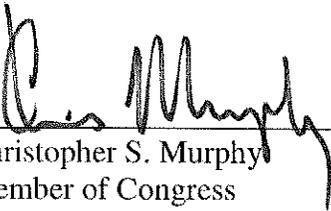
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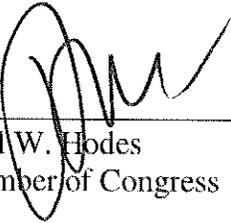
Tim Mahoney
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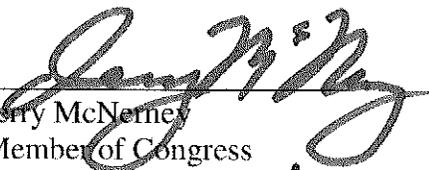
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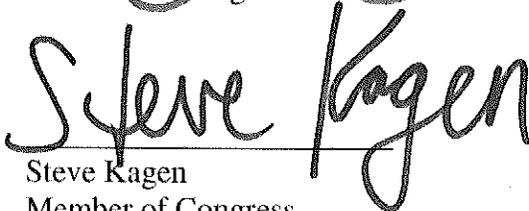

Kirsten E. Gillibrand
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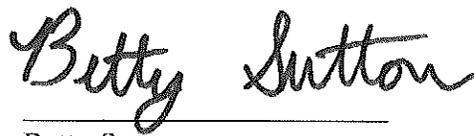

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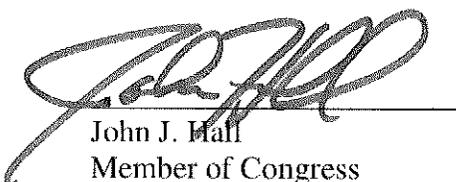

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