

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 10, 2006

The Honorable Thomas A. Shannon
Assistant Secretary
for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Ambassador Shannon:

We respectfully write to urge your public support for the protection of women and human rights defenders in Guatemala. We request that your office provide increased technical assistance for timely and thorough investigations of homicides. We also ask that you encourage the Guatemalan government to allocate adequate support and resources for the protection of victims of attacks, as well as witnesses, friends and family members.

Despite the specific commitments by the Guatemalan government to protect the lives of women and human rights defenders, increased violence against women, men and children in Guatemala is fast spiraling out of control. According to statistics from the Guatemalan National Civilian Police (PNC), the number of women who were murdered in 2005 represented a 110 percent increase from the number reported in 2002. By comparison the number of men who were murdered during the same time period rose by 41 percent. Most of these women and adolescent girls are from poor urban areas. Prosecution of these crimes is almost nonexistent, and consequently the attacks on women have become more frequent and brutal.

Non-governmental women's and human rights organizations in Guatemala, along with the Special Rapporteurs on Women from both the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS), have noted the inadequate response from the government to the killing of women. There is a disconcerting tendency by local authorities to blame the victims instead of focusing resources on investigating the crimes and prosecuting the assailants. Human rights leaders throughout the world have expressed concerns that the increase in criminality creates a perception that there is a basic lack of safety and accountability in Guatemala. A 2004 report by the OAS Special Rapporteur on Women highlights that the justice system has not responded effectively to such crimes, giving rise to both impunity and an increased sense of insecurity among women.

To counter this destabilizing trend in a close U.S. ally, we strongly encourage you to allocate appropriate resources and undertake diplomatic measures to address the crisis. Positive first steps in this regard would include supporting the implementation of the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Domestic and Interfamilial Violence. We need to reinforce existing forensic teams and provide other investigative tools. Additional assistance should be provided to harmonize data collection on crimes against women and human rights defenders. Finally, to bring alleged assailants to justice and combat the culture of impunity, we urge you

to increase public support for the Guatemalan human rights ombudsman and other victims' rights advocates.

We look forward to collaborating with you on these and other issues, and to receiving regular reports on the progress and the response of the Guatemalan government to these concerns.

Sincerely,

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Dei Miller
Member of Congress

Kamal Iqbal
Member of Congress

John W. Oliver
Member of Congress

C.W. Burkoff
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

Pete Starks
Member of Congress

Rubin Hernandez
Member of Congress

Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress

Janet Lee
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Nancy Kaptur
Member of Congress

David Nadler
Member of Congress

William C. Whitby
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Henry H. Cantello
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Seema Chhabra
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Paul Chen
Member of Congress

Janet Lee
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John B. Ruan
Member of Congress

Joe Brown
Member of Congress

Virgil Goode
Member of Congress

Mohammed Elhadi
Member of Congress

Cynthia
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Debra Kamin
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Robert E. Latta
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Sam Graves
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Mark H. Marko
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Wm. Lacy Clay
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Am. DeSantis
Member of Congress

Edward J. Markey
Member of Congress

Ralph G. Kautz
Member of Congress

J. Lewis
Member of Congress

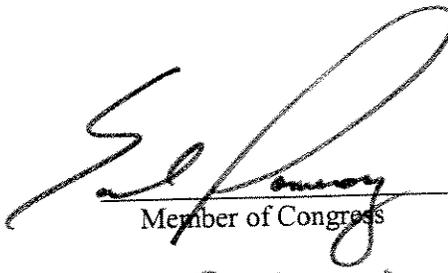
Nita M. Lowery
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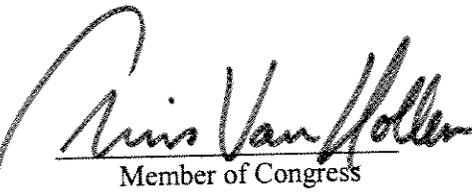
Charles B. McMath
Member of Congress

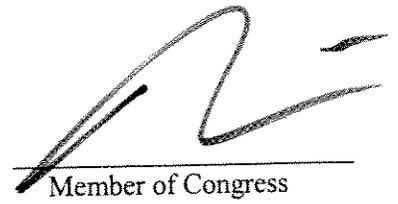
George Miller
Member of Congress

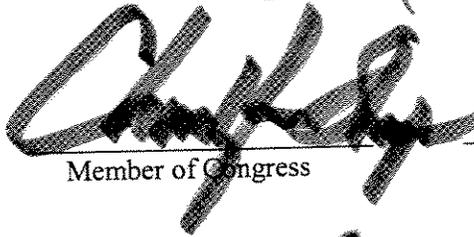
Rick Warren
Member of Congress

Tom Cotton
Member of Congress

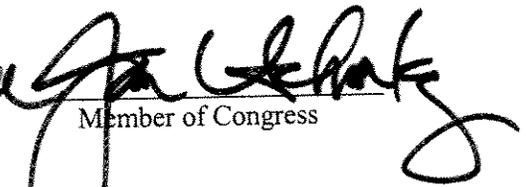

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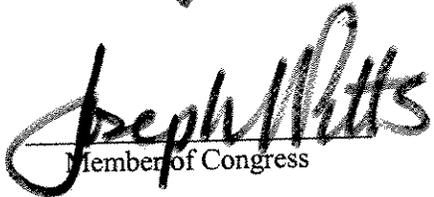

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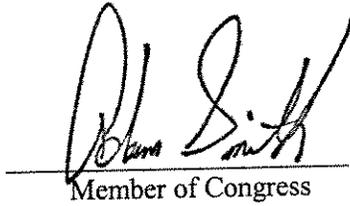

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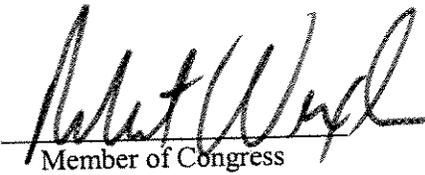

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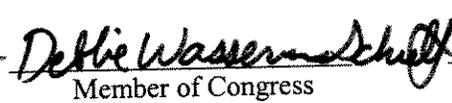

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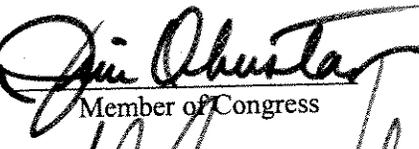

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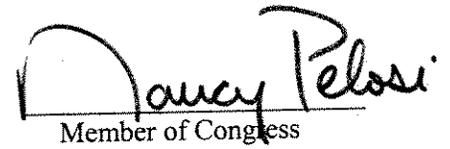

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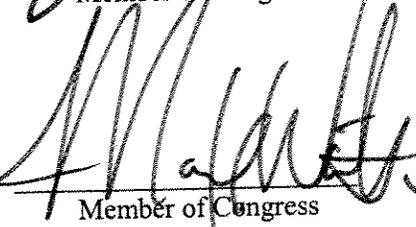

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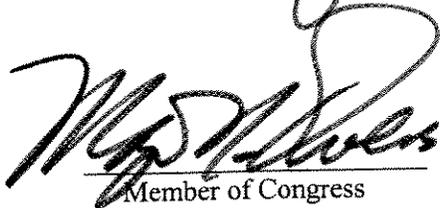

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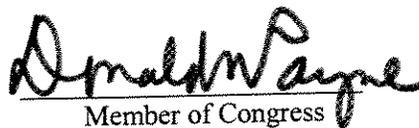

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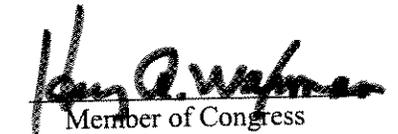

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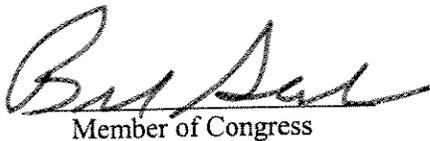

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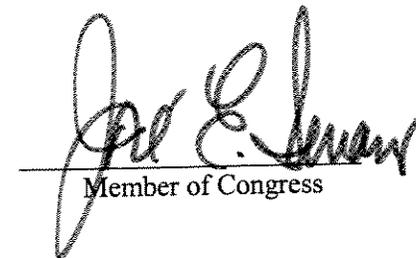

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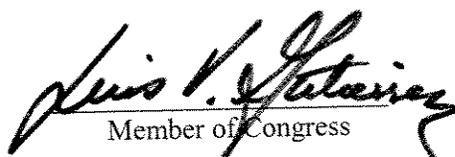

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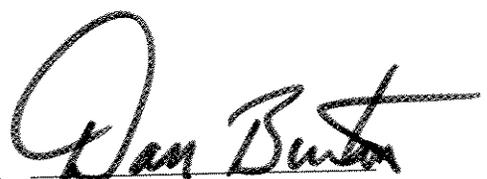

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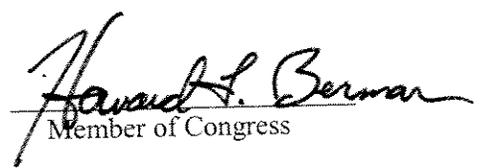

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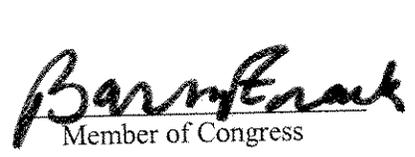

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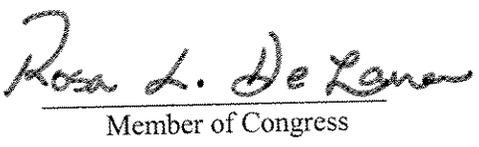

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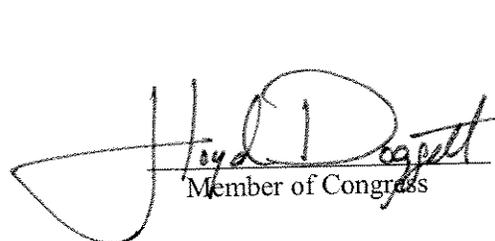

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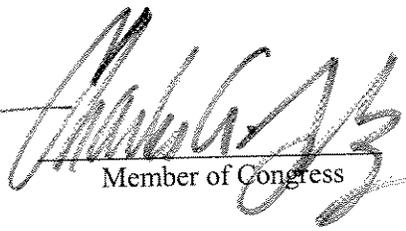

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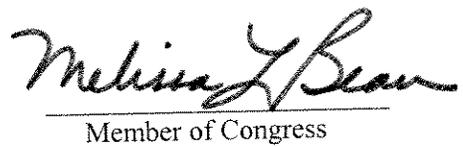

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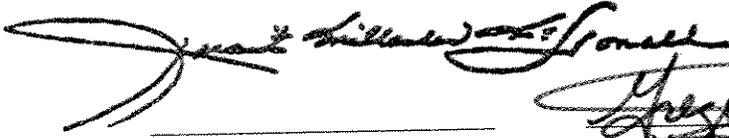

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Eleanor H. Norton Henry J. Cuellar Paul S. Gill
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Stephen R. Lubie Glenn Johnson Jr
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2. Allen
3. Baca
4. Baldwin
5. Bean, M.
6. Becerra
7. Berkley
8. Berman
9. Boustany
10. Brown, S.
11. Burton
12. Capps
13. Carson
14. Christensen
15. Cleaver
16. Conyers
17. Costello
18. D. Moore
19. Davis, D.
20. DeFazio
21. Delahunt
22. DeLauro
23. Doggett
24. Engel
25. Evans
26. Faleomavaega
27. Farr
28. Fitzpatrick
29. Frank
30. Gonzalez
31. Green, G.
32. Grijlava
33. Gutierrez
34. Harman
35. Hinchey
36. Hinojosa
37. Holt
38. Honda
39. Inslee
40. Jackson, Jr.
41. Jackson-Lee
42. Jefferson
43. Kaptur
44. Kildee
45. Kilpatrick
46. Kirk
47. Kucinich
48. Lacy Clay
49. Langevin
50. Lantos
51. Larsen
52. Larson (CT)
53. Latham
54. Leach
55. Lee
56. Lewis, J.
57. Lipinski
58. Lofgren
59. Lowey
60. Lynch, S.
61. Maloney
62. Markey
63. Marshall, J.
64. McCarthy
65. McCollum
66. McCotter
67. McDermott
68. McGovern
69. McKinney
70. McNulty
71. Meeks
72. Michaud
73. Millender-McDonald
74. Miller, B.
75. Miller, G.
76. Moore, G.
77. Moran
78. Nadler
79. Napolitano
80. Norton
81. Oberstar
82. Olver
83. Owens
84. Payne
85. Pelosi
86. Pitts
87. Pomeroy
88. Rangel
89. Rothman
90. Roybal-Allard
91. Rush
92. S. Levin
93. Sanchez, Linda
94. Sanders
95. Schakowsky
96. Schiff
97. Serrano
98. Shays
99. Slaughter
100. Smith, A.
101. Solis
102. Stark
103. Tauscher
104. Thompson, M.
105. Tim Ryan
106. Tubbs Jones
107. Udall, M.
108. Van Hollen
109. Wasserman Schultz
110. Waters
111. Watson
112. Waxman
113. Weiner
114. Wexler
115. Woolsey