

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

April 7, 2008

The Honorable Nouri al-Maliki
Prime Minister
Embassy of Iraq
3421 Massachusetts Ave., N.W
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dear Prime Minister al-Maliki:

We are writing to strongly recommend that your government take the necessary steps to promote worker rights, which we believe are necessary for a well-functioning democracy. There is no question that the government of Iraq still confronts a number of serious challenges in its ongoing efforts to establish the rule of law and to promote the fundamental human rights of its citizens. We believe that the promotion of fundamental worker rights is essential to ensuring that the exercise of human rights becomes a reality for the people of Iraq.

We applaud the 2004 agreement between the Iraq's Minister of Labor and the International Labor Organization (ILO) under which the ILO would assist the Iraqi government in drafting a new labor law consistent with international labor standards. We believe that the ILO core labor rights would provide the basis for constructive industrial relations and conflict resolution for workers and employers that are fundamental to a well-functioning democracy and a strong economy. We are deeply troubled that although a new law was drafted, it has not yet been adopted. To the contrary, the laws and policies that undermine worker rights remain in place.

Of particular concern to us is that, according to the United States Department of State, the 1987 Trade Union Organization Law imposed by Saddam Hussein to effectively ban independent trade unions still remains in force in Iraq. Under the law, the right to bargain collectively and the right to strike were abolished, as was the nation's minimum wage. Currently, all public sector workers are prohibited from forming a union. In the private sector, unions can be formed only in worksites employing more than 50 workers -- only a small fraction of the workforce in Iraq. By law, unions are also required to affiliate with the state-controlled federation of workers.


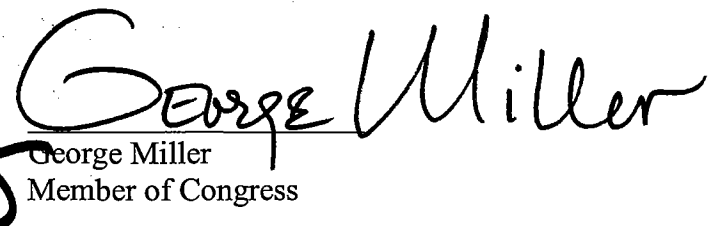

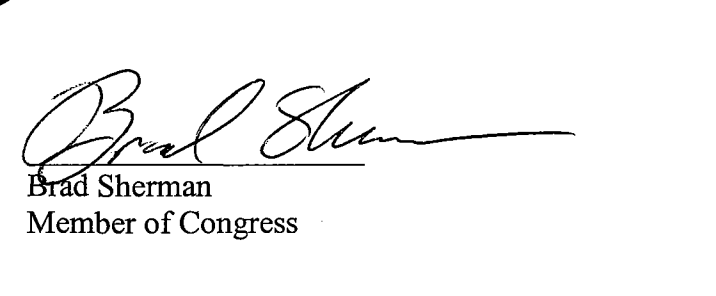
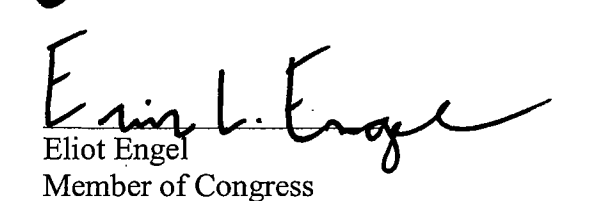

Further, we understand that the Iraqi government has approved legislation that substantially frustrates the exercise of trade union activity. Decree 8750, which was issued by the government on August 7, 2005, directed that all union bank accounts in the country be frozen. This measure has made dues collection impossible, crippling unions'

ability to function. Union officials rightly fear that any dues deposited in a bank will be confiscated by the state.

We are also deeply concerned that the Iraqi government has reacted harshly to trade union activity, particularly in the oil sector. For example, when months of discussions between the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions (IFOU) and the government over wages, health and safety, the use of temporary workers, and the proposed oil law failed to produce a negotiated agreement, the union went on a limited strike outside of Basra on Monday, June 4, 2007. In response, the government sent out the Iraqi armed forces to the oil fields, surrounding and threatening the workers at gunpoint and issued arrest warrants for the union's leaders. Further, the Iraqi Minister of Oil has issued a directive prohibiting oil companies from dealing with the unions and worker committees and the Ministry of Industry and Minerals has recently issued a similar directive.

Again, we reiterate our support of your government as it continues to face challenges on numerous fronts. However, we strongly urge you to refrain from taking any further measures that may undermine the fundamental rights of workers, and we urge you to immediately recognize and encourage bargaining with all legitimate trade unions and promptly enact a new labor law that is consistent with the ILO core labor rights.

Sincerely,

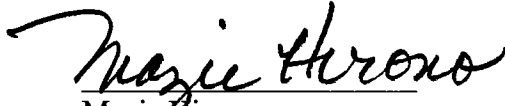
 Jan Schakowsky Member of Congress	 George Miller Member of Congress
 John Larson Member of Congress	 Brad Sherman Member of Congress
 Eliot Engel Member of Congress	 Mike Michaud Member of Congress



Betty Sutton
Member of Congress



Phil Hare
Member of Congress



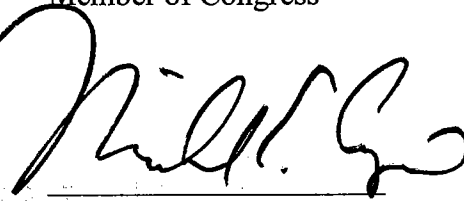
Mazie Hirono
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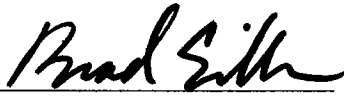
Mike Honda
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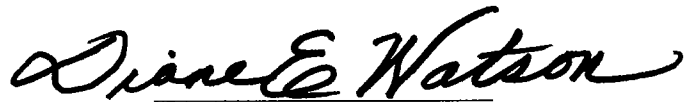
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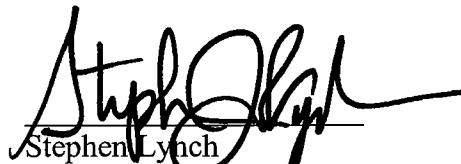
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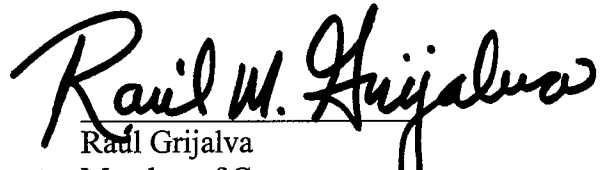


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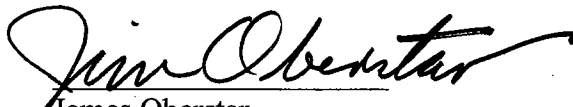
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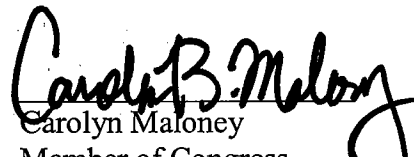

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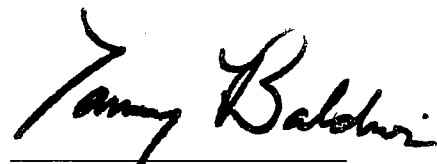

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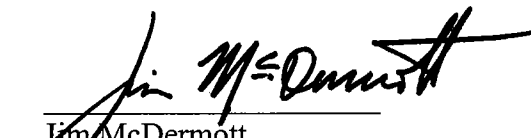

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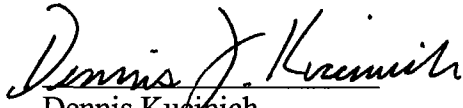

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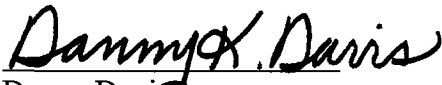

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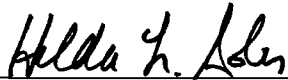
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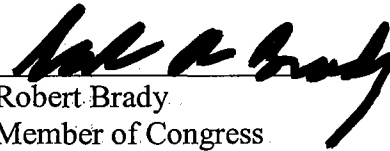
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