

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 30, 2009

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Levin and Ranking Member McCain,

We write to ask you to support the provision included in the House-passed version of H.R. 2647, the FY 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, to restore public access to the names of graduates and instructors at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC). We represent opposing views about the future of the WHINSEC, whether to shut it down or work to improve it, but on this important matter we agree.

This is the second year in a row that the full U.S. House of Representatives has voted to include this provision in the NDAA, and we urge you and the Senate conferees to respect the will of the House in this important matter.

During the years of its predecessor institution, the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA), and through mid-2006 for the WHINSEC, the names of Latin American and U.S. military personnel who attended or taught at the school were always made available to the public, either by simply asking officials at the school or through the more formal process of filing a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. Then, abruptly, in August 2006, shortly after Congress held its very first debate on the future of the WHINSEC, the names were classified and, for the first time in the half-century history of the school, withheld from the public.

We believe public access needs to be restored.


The WHINSEC should serve as a democratic model to our Latin American military counterparts. What kind of model are we providing for how to work with NGOs, including human rights groups, when we withhold this information from them? What kind of model in support of transparency and democratic values? How can the WHINSEC continue to improve, if it insulates itself from independent critique and review – particularly when one of its missions is democratic transparency?

It is difficult to understand the national security or privacy concerns raised by some with regard to the release of the names if this category of information has been released in the past for so many years. As you are aware, official WHINSEC newsletters and other materials often cite the names of students and instructors, sometimes accompanied by photographs and even

personal family information, when it serves the purpose of public relations and promotes good works by the school and its graduates.

Once again, we urge you to accept the House-approved provision restoring public access to the names of students and faculty at the WHINSEC.


Sincerely,




James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Joe Sestak
Member of Congress




John Lewis
Member of Congress




Jane Harman
Member of Congress




George Miller
Member of Congress



Ted Poe
Member of Congress



Henry Waxman
Member of Congress



David E. Price
Member of Congress



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



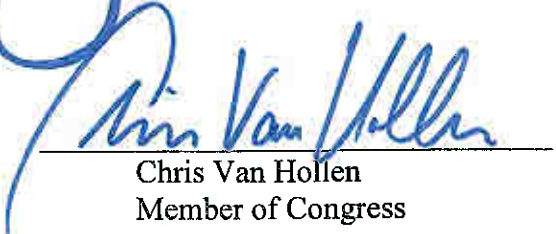
Dennis Moore
Member of Congress



Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Steven R. Rothman
Member of Congress



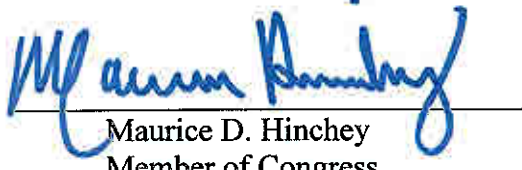
Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



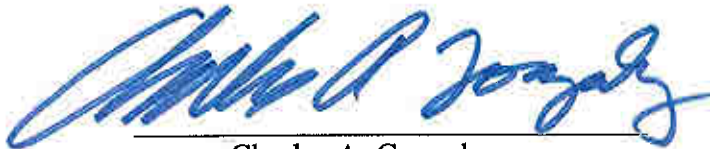
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



Maurice D. Hinchey
Member of Congress



Bob Filner
Member of Congress



Charles A. Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Marcia Fudge
Member of Congress



Paul W. Hodes
Member of Congress





Steve Driehaus
Member of Congress

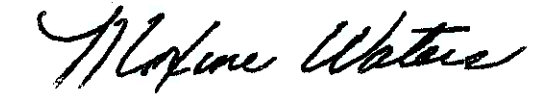

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress


Timothy J. Walz
Member of Congress


Betty Sutton
Member of Congress


Maxine Waters
Member of Congress


Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress


Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress


Mike Quigley
Member of Congress


Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Ike Skelton, Chairman, House Armed Services Committee
The Honorable John M. McHugh, Ranking Member, House Armed Services Committee

Donald M. Payne

Donald M. Payne
Member of Congress

Patrick J. Kennedy

Patrick J. Kennedy
Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin

Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress

Dale E. Kildee

Dale E. Kildee
Member of Congress

Ron Paul

Ron Paul
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