

# United States Congress

Washington DC, 20510

October 27, 2017

The Honorable John McCain  
Chairman  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
House Armed Services Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen McCain and Thornberry and Ranking Members Reed and Smith:

As you begin conference negotiations on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018, we strongly urge you to include Section 336 of the House-passed legislation, which recognizes climate change as a national security issue.

Section 336 was developed through an amendment from Congressman Jim Langevin of Rhode Island, and passed the House Armed Services Committee with 27 cosponsors and a bipartisan voice vote. Members spoke in recognition of the need to focus on how a changing climate affects the threat assessments, resources, and readiness within the mission of the Department of Defense (DOD). Furthermore, when the House bill came to the floor, an amendment attempting to strip the language from the bill failed by recorded vote: nays 234 to ayes 185.

The Pentagon's top military and civilian officials have stated publicly that climate change is a direct threat to U.S. national security and to global security. Secretary of Defense Mattis has stated: "the effects of a changing climate – such as increased maritime access to the Arctic, rising sea levels, desertification, among others – will impact our security situation."<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, the DOD's climate concerns are echoed by leaders of the Intelligence Community. The Director of National Intelligence has stated, "We assess that a heightened risk of climate change effects, extreme weather events, conflict, disease spread, and environmental degradation

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<sup>1</sup> Secretary Mattis, Confirmation Hearing Questions for the Record, *Senate Armed Services Committee*, <https://climateandsecurity.org/2017/03/14/secretary-mattis-clear-eyed-on-climate-security-risks/>, (January 20, 2017).

are likely to cause disruptions to local, regional, and global food supplies during the next 10 years. In some cases, these dynamics will interact. For example, warmer temperatures might lead to disease spread or prolonged drought, prompting rapid rural migration to cities. In turn, urban slums may become hotbeds for unrest.”<sup>2</sup>

It is critical that the DOD remains resilient and prepared to address the effects of climate change on threat assessments, resources, and readiness, as well as to conduct operations both today and in the future. Doing so requires study by the Services and Combatant Commands as to the specific vulnerabilities we face.

We must continue to be realistic, and to explore the changing ways that a volatile climate will threaten the Department’s mission – whether that is through sea level rise affecting our naval installations, impacts on our inland training, or a changing strategic landscape due to economic migration, desertification, and other resource limitations.

Once again, we urge you to adopt the House language in Section 336, which recognizes climate change as a national security issue, and allows the DOD to assess its risks and steps to mitigate such threats. As public officials charged with overseeing our national security, we have a responsibility to recognize a changing climate as a part of America’s military planning, and to constructively mitigate this readiness threat and strategic challenge.

Sincerely,



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Scott Peters  
Member of Congress



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Don Bacon  
Member of Congress

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<sup>2</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “Global Food Security,” *Intelligence Community Assessment*, [https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Reports%20and%20Pubs/Global\\_Food\\_Security\\_ICA.pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Reports%20and%20Pubs/Global_Food_Security_ICA.pdf), (September 22, 2015).




Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress



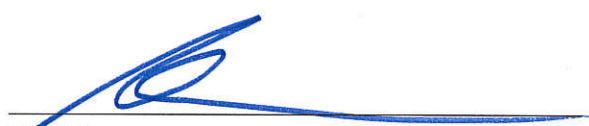
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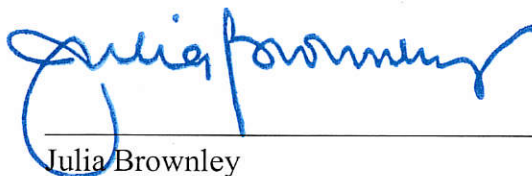
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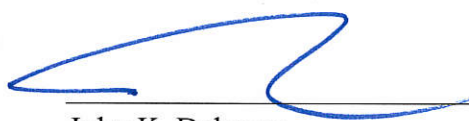
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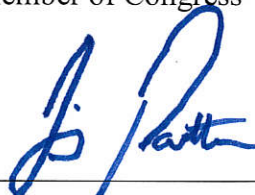
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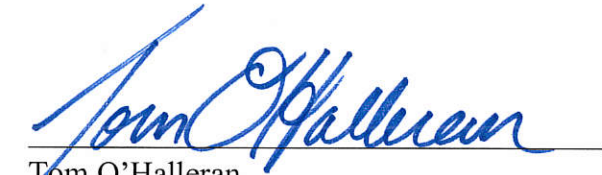
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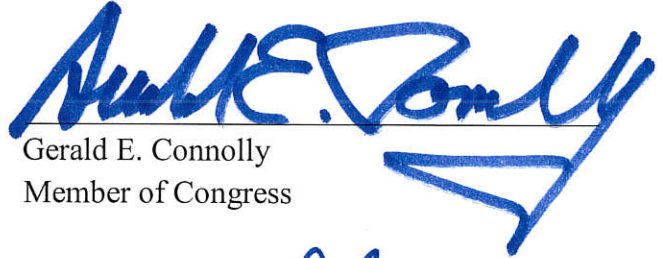
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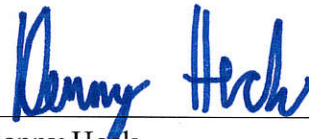
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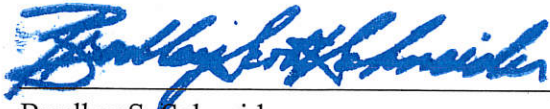
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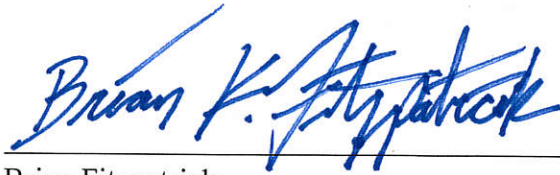
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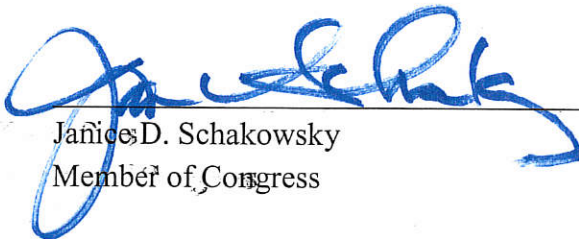
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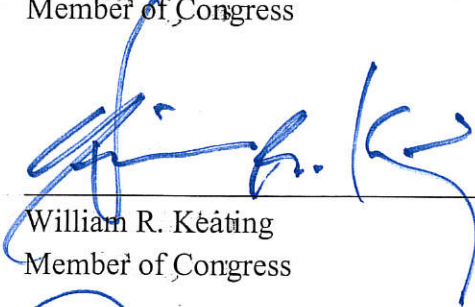
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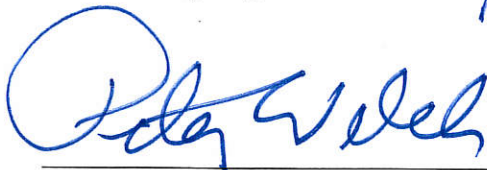
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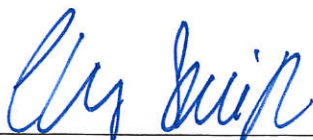
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Peter Welch  
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Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



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Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

Cc: House and Senate Members of the NDAA Conference Committee