

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge you to swiftly appoint a new high-level Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). As you know, former Senator and Special Envoy Russell Feingold served in this role for 18-months and made 15 trips to the region where he demonstrated direct and consistent leadership, engaging with the Government of DRC, the Congolese people and the international community.

We are concerned that the Special Envoy's departure in February, without a replacement, signals a waning of U.S. leadership.

We, like you, are focused on ensuring that the fragile progress toward peace and stability in DRC has not been achieved in vain. It was the engagement of the Special Envoy (among others) that contributed to M23's surrender. The Special Envoy also played a central role in helping move forward the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework, a vital regional agreement. These accomplishments and others demonstrate the importance of this highly visible and critical office.

We strongly believe that a dynamic, well-resourced Special Envoy, reporting directly to the Secretary of State, is critical to addressing the ongoing challenges in Congo and promoting wider stability in the region. While we understand conversations regarding the new appointment are underway, we strongly encourage you to move swiftly to fill this vacancy to preserve the achievements made by this office. Recent events in West, Central and East Africa remind us that U.S. national security interests in the region have never been more important or strategic.

Since Senator Feingold's departure, the human rights situation in DRC has suffered a serious setback. On March 15, human rights activists, including a US diplomat, were arrested at a workshop on civic engagement supported by the U.S. Several remain in detention without charge and with limited access to family and counsel.

Congo is at a critical turning point in its history. With the relatively peaceful and fair presidential election in Nigeria, we are hopeful a similar outcome can be achieved in DRC's 2016 presidential election. This, however, cannot be reached overnight and will depend upon U.S. and international engagement to support a fair and transparent electoral process. It is important that the new Envoy spend significant time in the region. Furthermore, progress made in the fragile peace process in eastern Congo threatens to be undone unless Congo and the international

community can agree on a comprehensive strategy to address the threat of armed groups including the FDLR.

We know that you share our concern for DRC and a commitment to durable peace, stability, and economic development for the region, as demonstrated by your recent conversation with President Kabila and the Administration high-level diplomatic engagement over the last two years. We look forward to working with you and the new Special Envoy toward a more peaceful, stable Congo and Great Lakes Region.

Sincerely,



Karen Bass
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Christopher H. Smith
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Richard J. Durbin
UNITES STATES SENATOR



John Boozman
UNITES STATES SENATOR



Barbara Lee
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Charles B. Rangel
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



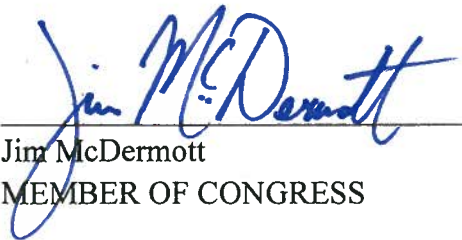
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MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Scott DesJarlais
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James P. McGovern
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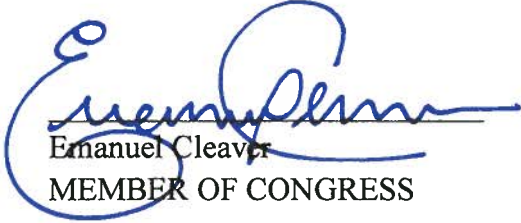
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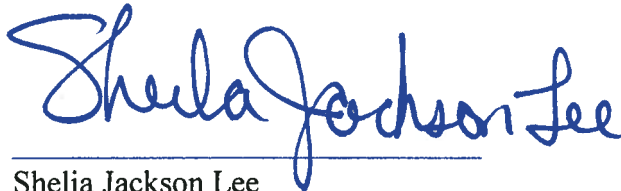
Adam Smith
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Gwen Moore
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



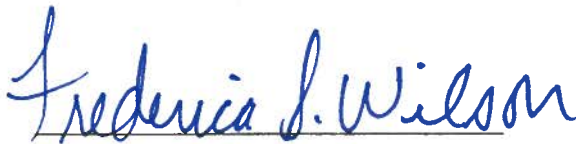
Bobby L. Rush
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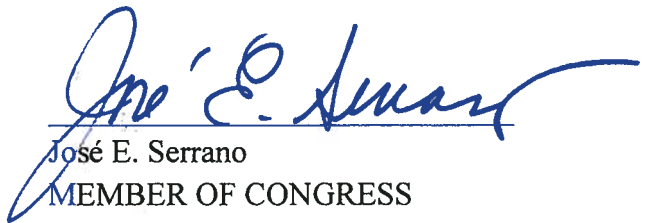
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