

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 10, 2017

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson,

We write to express our profound concern over the statements made by President Trump that dramatically increased tensions with North Korea and raised the specter of nuclear war. These statements are irresponsible and dangerous, and also senselessly provide a boon to domestic North Korean propaganda which has long sought to portray the United States as a threat to their people.

Accordingly, we respectfully but firmly urge you to do everything in your power to ensure that President Trump and other Administration officials understand the importance of speaking and acting with the utmost caution and restraint on this delicate issue. Congress and the American public will hold President Trump responsible if a careless or ill-advised miscalculation results in conflict that endangers our servicemembers and regional allies. To allay these concerns, the Trump Administration should publicly declare its agreement with the constitutional requirement that any preemptive attack on North Korea must be debated and authorized by Congress.

As 64 Members of Congress wrote in May, "Military action against North Korea was considered by the Obama, Bush and Clinton Administrations, but all ultimately determined there was no military option that would not run the unacceptable risk of a counter-reaction from Pyongyang [that] could immediately threaten the lives of as many as a third of the South Korean population, put nearly 30,000 U.S. service members and over 100,000 other U.S. citizens residing in South Korea in grave danger, and also threaten other regional allies such as Japan." Simply put, there is no military solution to this problem.

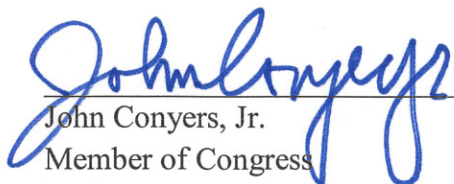
We strongly support your recent statements calling for direct talks with North Korea and offering assurances that our country is not their enemy and does not seek war or regime change. This accords with the approach that 64 Members of Congress urged in the letter to President Trump, and is also backed by leading experts on US-North Korea policy, including former Secretary of Defense William Perry, former Secretary of State George Schultz and former Senator Richard Lugar who have stated that our country "should make clear that the United States does not have hostile intentions toward North Korea."

An approach that includes these elements has shown promise in the past. In 1994, after North Korea's announced their intent to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), the United States and North Korea engaged in direct diplomacy, resulting in the Agreed Framework. Under the pact, Pyongyang agreed to freeze its nuclear program, while U.S. committed to provide fuel for electricity to offset the power lost from shutting down their plutonium reactor. Despite allegations from both sides of non-compliance with the agreement, North Korea did not reopen their plutonium reactor, and in October 2000, the two countries pledged in writing that neither would have "hostile intent" towards the other. This progress was regrettably and unnecessarily halted after the Bush Administration took office, as then-Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton publicly admitted that he was "looking for [a hammer] to shatter the Agreed Framework." We are grateful that you understand the urgent need to make a good faith effort to replicate these successes and we urge you to minimize preconditions in order to bring the North Koreans to the table and commence dialogue at the earliest possible date.

Finally, we respectfully request your assistance in receiving a response to our initial inquiry in our May letter. Kindly provide us information about the specific steps your Administration is taking to advance the prospects for direct negotiations that could lower the potential for catastrophic war and ultimately lead to the denuclearization of the peninsula. We also request any plans you may have to address important humanitarian issues of mutual concern such as the reunification of Korean and Korean-American families as well as the repatriation of the remains of US servicemen left in North Korea following the War, including whether these or other humanitarian efforts will be impeded by your newly announced travel ban.

We look forward to working with you to support crucial diplomatic initiatives and avoid catastrophic war.


Sincerely,



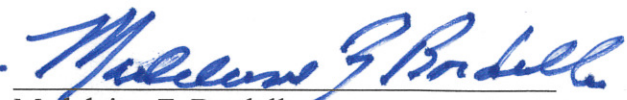
John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress



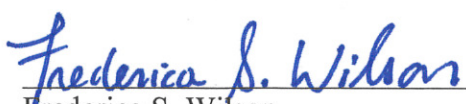
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



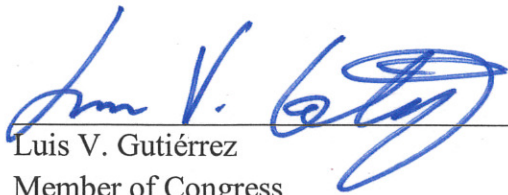
Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Member of Congress



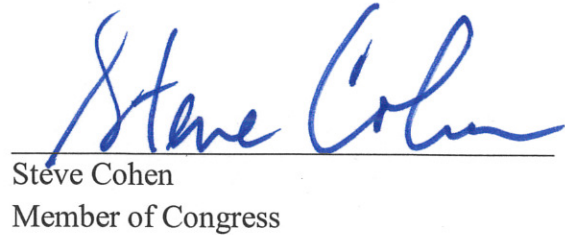
Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



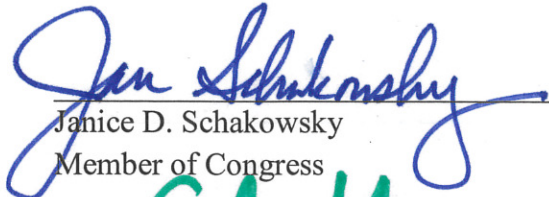
Judy Chu
Member of Congress



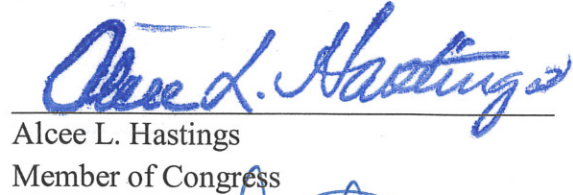
Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress



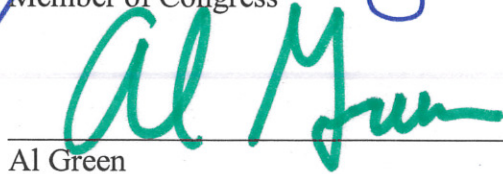
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



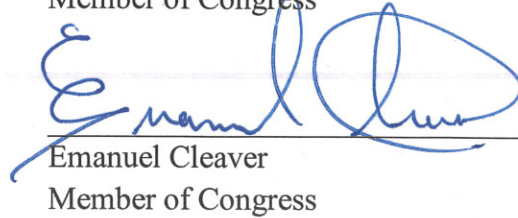
Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



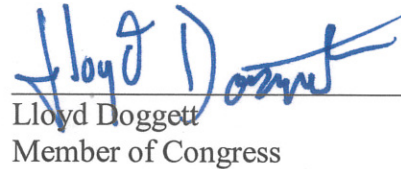
Al Green
Member of Congress



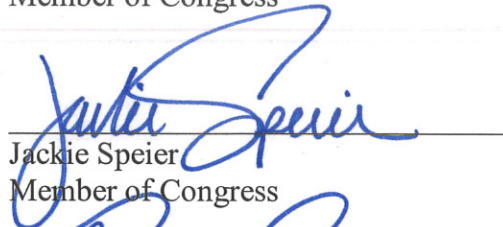
Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress



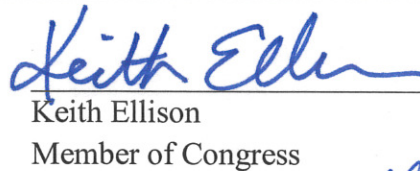
Timothy J. Walz
Member of Congress



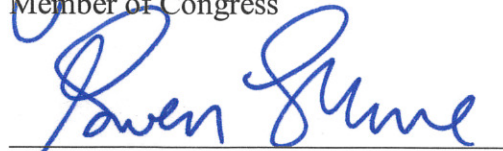
Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



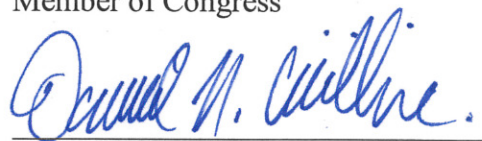
Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



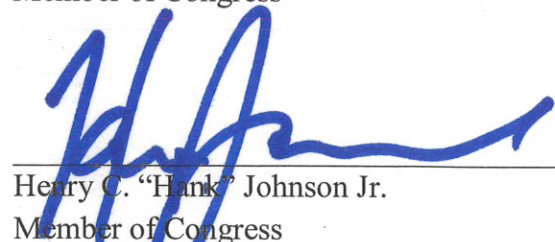
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



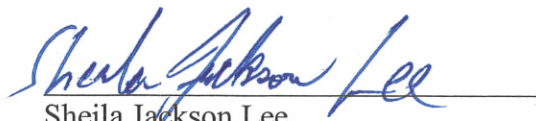
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Karen Bass
Member of Congress



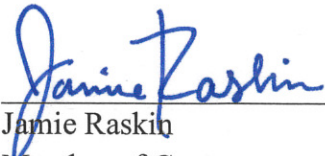
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson Jr.
Member of Congress



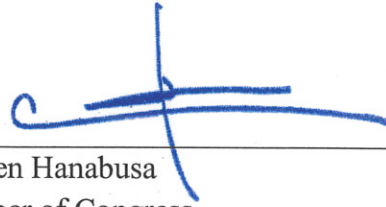
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



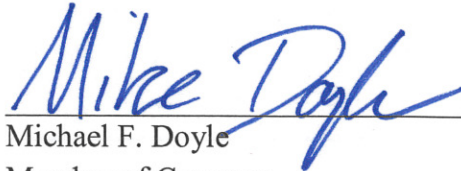
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



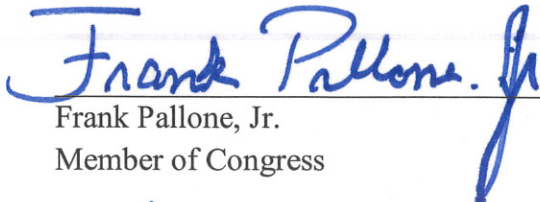
Colleen Hanabusa
Member of Congress



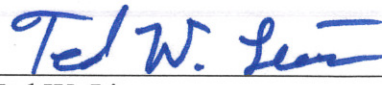
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Michael F. Doyle
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress



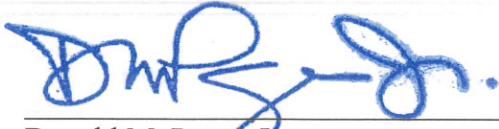
Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



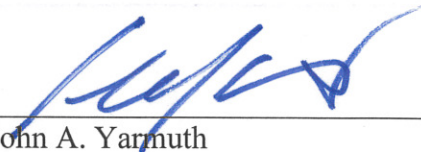
Alma S. Adams
Member of Congress



Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne Jr.
Member of Congress



John A. Yarmuth
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



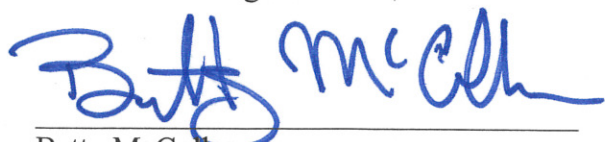
José E. Serrano
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Eleanor H. Norton

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Niki Tsongas

Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Carol Shea-Porter

Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress

Raul M. Grijalva

Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Tulsi Gabbard

Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress

Darren Soto

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Al Lawson

Al Lawson Jr.
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragan

Nanette Diaz Barragan
Member of Congress

Brenda L. Lawrence

Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



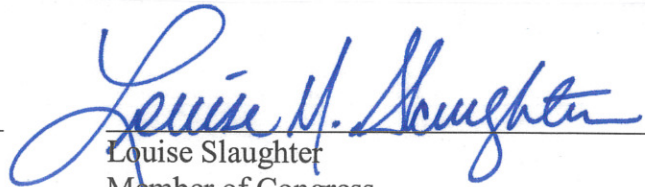
Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



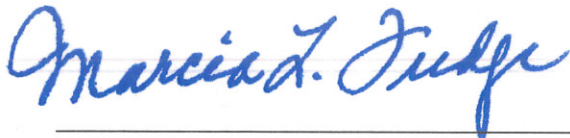
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



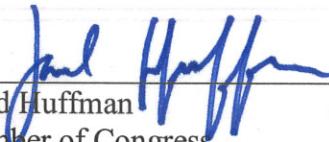
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



Louise Slaughter
Member of Congress



Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee

Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress