

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 15, 2024

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chair
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Pingree:

Nearly sixty years ago, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1964 established America's most successful conservation program. This landmark law was designed to assure our growing population that outdoor recreation lands would be secured, on a pay-as-you-go basis, for future Americans' requirements. We are thrilled that the 116th Congress voted overwhelmingly to pass two major bills making LWCF permanent with the Dingell Act of 2019 and the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) of 2020. The two acts secured permanent reauthorization and full permanent funding, respectively, making a definitive statement in support of LWCF as a uniquely constructed, common-sense concept of dedicating the proceeds from public resource extraction for the protection of our greatest natural parks and outdoor places.

Now that Congress has resoundingly affirmed its commitment to LWCF as originally intended by protecting the program's annual \$900 million deposits for the long-term and ensuring the direction of those funds to their intended conservation and recreation purposes, we look forward to working on a bipartisan basis toward efficient implementation and strong continuing oversight of our nation's most important conservation and recreation program. GAOA reinforced the critical decision-making role of Congress in determining LWCF funding for its multiple authorized federal agency programs and state grant programs through the annual appropriations process. With the passage of GAOA, Congress finally and permanently ended the history of underfunding, which has limited LWCF from the outset, and provided a solid floor for future investment in conservation and recreation. We particularly want to thank both Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Pingree for your longstanding leadership in these efforts.

We greatly appreciate that the FY 2024 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies bill fully invests in LWCF and urge that in the FY 2025 bill you recognize the resounding level of support for LWCF, and the backlog of compelling now-or-never conservation and recreation needs in communities across America by investing the increased resources needed to successfully implement this valuable, time-tested program. We thank the Subcommittee for its vital work in FY24 to produce a bill with strong project oversight and balanced allocations among LWCF subprograms according to the formula set down by the Dingell Act: at least 40% for federal agency conservation and recreation priorities (USFS, BLM, USFWS, NPS), at least 40% for the suite of LWCF state and local grant programs (State and Local Assistance Program, Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership program, Forest Legacy Program, American Battlefield Protection Program, Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Grants,

and Highlands Grant Program), and the remaining 20% allocated among the suite of 10 programs based on need.

We once again request that in FY25 you retain unobligated, prior-year discretionary LWCF funds within appropriate programs rather than allowing them to be rescinded. The programs under the LWCF umbrella are oversubscribed and full funding of LWCF has not eliminated the backlog of time-sensitive conservation and recreation priorities. We appreciate the Subcommittee's past practice of addressing unmet needs by keeping funds in place for viable funded projects within these accounts, and for reinvesting them in LWCF program needs through reprogramming in the event specified project needs have changed. Additionally, with demand continuing to outstrip available LWCF funding, we urge you to take this approach in FY25.

Investments in LWCF support public land conservation and ensure access to the outdoors for all Americans, in rural communities and cities alike. It has created outdoor recreation opportunities in every state and 98 percent of counties across the country, opening key areas for hunting, fishing, and other recreational access; supporting working forests and ranches; and acquiring inholdings and protecting critical lands in national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, Civil War battlefields, and other federal areas.

LWCF is essential to America's outdoor recreation economy, which contributes \$1.1 trillion to the nation's economy each year and supports 5 million American jobs (more than utilities or construction). Support for public lands among the American public remains consistently and overwhelmingly strong.

We look forward to working with you and other members of the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies in the coming months to ensure that the suite of LWCF programs receive the high priority they need in FY25 to maintain our commitment to conservation and recreation, as well as to states and local communities. We urge you to provide balanced allocations for LWCF in FY25, retain unobligated funds with LWCF programs, and include the full project priority lists in the Subcommittee report accompanying the bill. As our nation continues to see rapid loss of natural areas to development, and unprecedented use of parks, trails and other outdoor spaces during the pandemic, the need for increased investment in equitable access to the outdoors, natural infrastructure, and resilient landscapes to support both people and wildlife has never been more urgent.


Sincerely,




Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



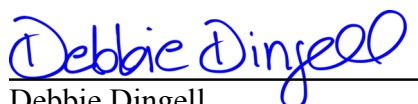
Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress




Joe Neguse
Member of Congress




Jefferson Van Drew
Member of Congress




Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress




Jared Huffman
Member of Congress




Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress



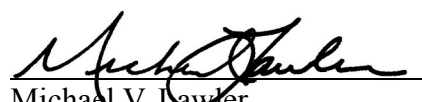
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress




Andrew R. Garbarino
Member of Congress



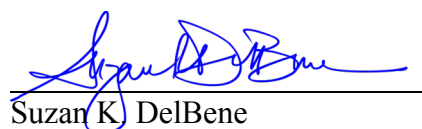
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



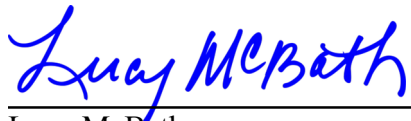
Michael V. Lawler
Member of Congress



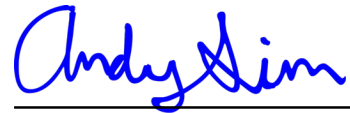
Gregorio Kilili Camacho
Sablan
Member of Congress



Suzan K. DelBene
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Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



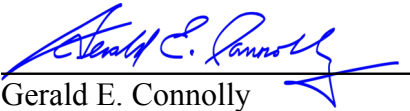
Andy Kim
Member of Congress



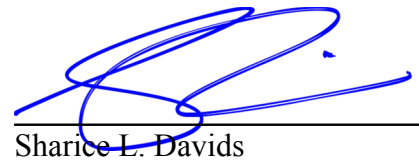
Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress



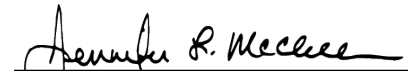
Gerald E. Connolly
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Sharice L. Davids
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Gregory W. Meeks
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Jennifer L. McClellan
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Donald Norcross
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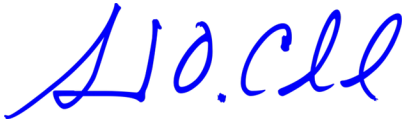
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



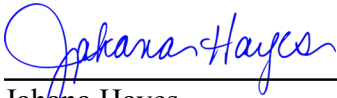
Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



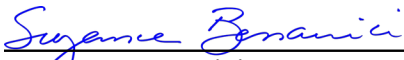
Nicole Malliotakis
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
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Suzanne Bonamici
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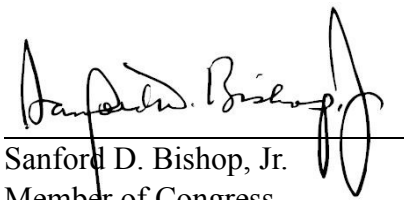
Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



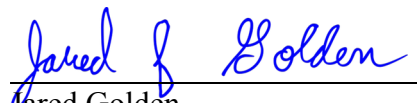
Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



Marcus J. Molinaro
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Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
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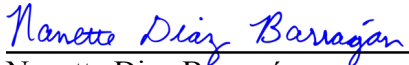
Jared Golden
Member of Congress




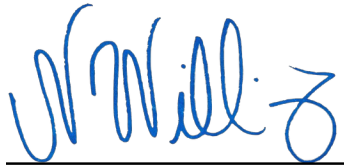
Mark Takano
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Colin Z. Allred
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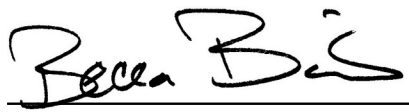

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

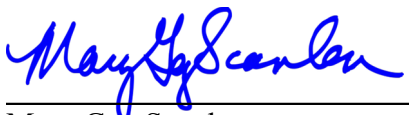

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Member of Congress

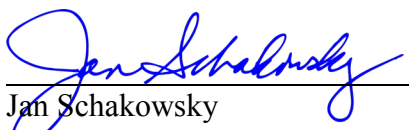

Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress

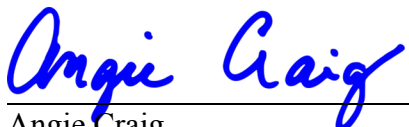

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

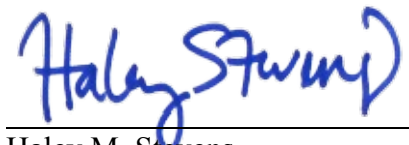

Becca Balint
Member of Congress

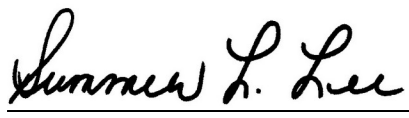

Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress


Lori Trahan
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Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress


Angie Craig
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Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress


Summer Lee
Member of Congress



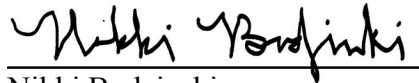
Chris Pappas
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Sheila Jackson Lee
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Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



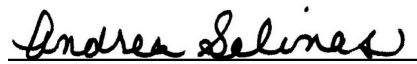
Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



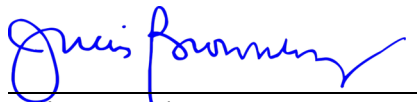
Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress



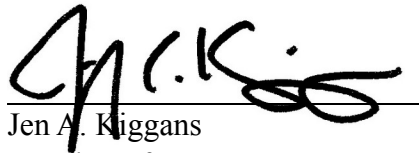
Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Jen A. Kiggans
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
Member of Congress



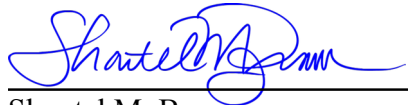
John B. Larson
Member of Congress



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



Jenniffer González-Colón
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



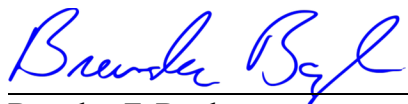
Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



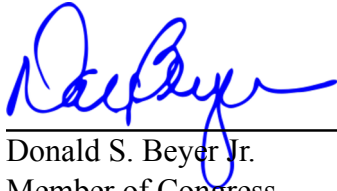
Carol D. Miller
Member of Congress



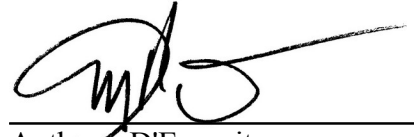
Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



Jim Himes
Member of Congress



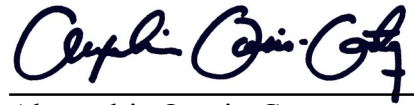
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Anthony D'Esposito
Member of Congress



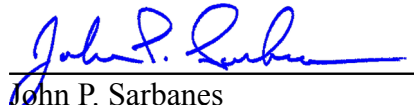
Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress



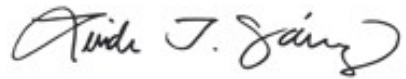
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
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Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress




Nick LaLota
Member of Congress




Grace F. Napolitano
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Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



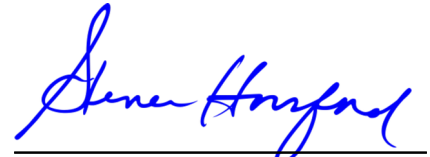
Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress




Marie Gluesenkamp Perez
Member of Congress




Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



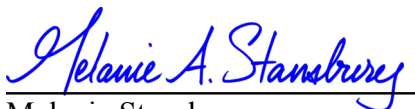
Steven Horsford
Member of Congress
Nevada's Fourth Congressional
District




Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress




Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress




Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress




Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



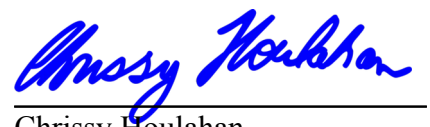
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



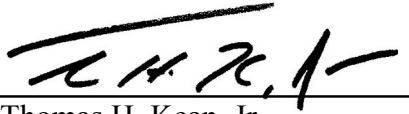
Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress



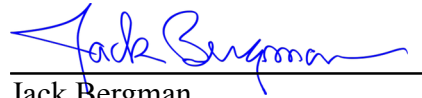
Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress



Thomas H. Kean, Jr.
Member of Congress



Jack Bergman
Member of Congress



Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress



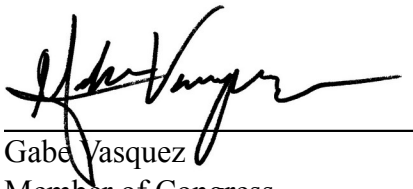
Katie Porter
Member of Congress



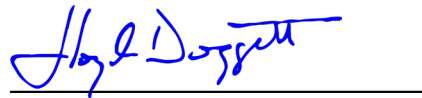
John Garamendi
Member of Congress



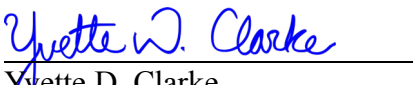
Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



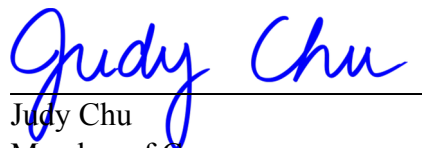
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
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Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
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Mary Gattler Peltola
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Mike Levin
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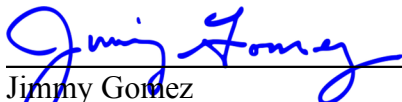
Nancy Mace
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Maxwell Alejandro Frost
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Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez
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Jasmine Crockett
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David Scott
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Kevin Mullin
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Jeff Jackson
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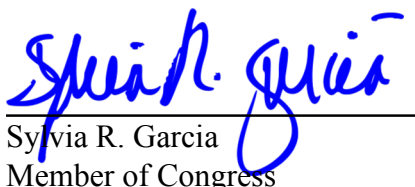
Dina Titus
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Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



Raul Ruiz, M.D.
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Sylvia R. Garcia
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Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



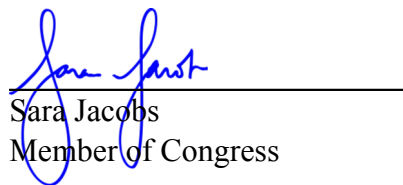
Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



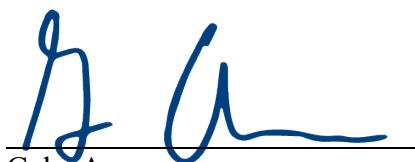
Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress



Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress



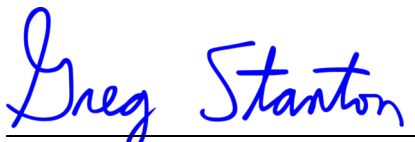
Sara Jacobs
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Gabe Amo
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Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress



Greg Stanton
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



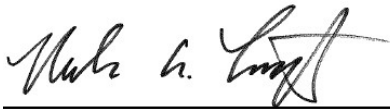
Patrick Ryan
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Juan Vargas
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Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Nicholas A. Langworthy
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



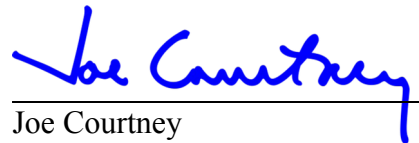
Darin LaHood
Member of Congress



Abigail Davis Spanberger
Member of Congress



Troy Carter
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



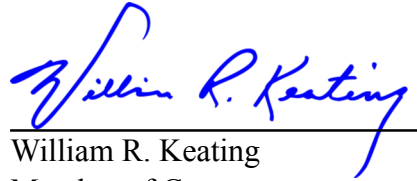
Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Morgan McGarvey
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



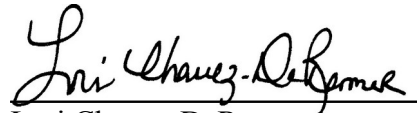
Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress



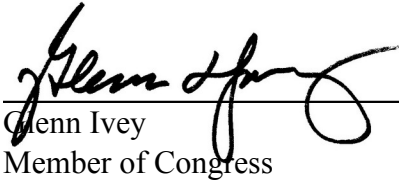
Dean Phillips
Member of Congress



Jared Moskowitz
Member of Congress



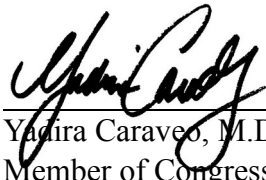
Lori Chavez-DeRemer
Member of Congress



Glenn Ivey
Member of Congress



Richard Hudson
Member of Congress



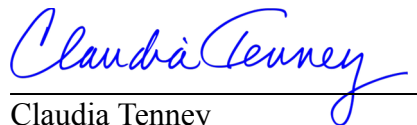
Yadira Caraveo, M.D.
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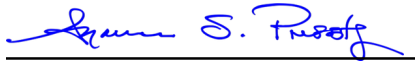
Stacey E. Plaskett
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Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



Claudia Tenney
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress



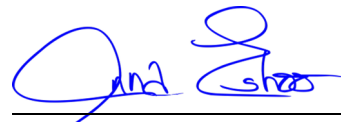
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress



Dan Meuser
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



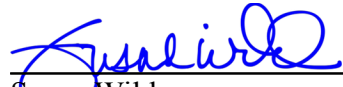
Robert J. Menendez
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



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



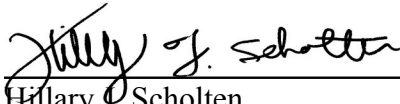
Susan Wild
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Hillary J. Scholten
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress



Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress