

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 1, 2007

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Gates:

Veterans and members of the armed services from our districts and across the country have expressed to us their concerns about the increased incidence of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease, or ALS) occurring in those who have served in the military. On behalf of these brave men and women, we the undersigned Members of Congress urge you to increase the Department's support for ALS research and request that you consider establishing a more coordinated approach to advancing ALS research at the Department of Defense.

As you may know, studies repeatedly have shown that military veterans are at a greater risk of dying from ALS than those with no history of military service. In fact, studies supported by the DOD and the Department of Veterans Affairs have found that veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf War are approximately twice as likely to develop ALS as those who did not serve in the war, while another study conducted by researchers at Harvard University in 2005 found that people with any history of military service are at a 60% greater risk of developing ALS than those in the general population. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recently reviewed these and other studies and reported in November 2006 that existing evidence supports the increased risk of ALS for veterans. According to the IOM, *"[T]he implication is that military service in general - not confined to exposures specific to the Gulf War - is related to the development of ALS. The findings, if validated in other studies, suggest that exposures during military service, even among those with no wartime service, might be responsible."*

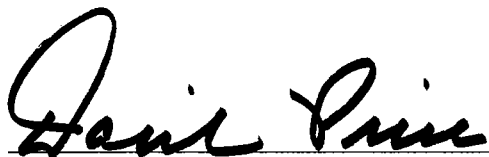
Despite this evidence, only about \$2 million in funding per year is focused on ALS research - a small amount given the direct impact this disease has on our heroes who serve in the military. Therefore, we urge the Department to allocate additional resources for ALS research within the funds Congress provides to the Defense Health Program.

We are aware that the Department has funded ALS research through the Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program, the Military Operational Medicine Program and the Neurotoxin Exposure Treatment Research Program. These programs have enabled important ALS research to move forward. However, we believe the Department should consider establishing a more focused and coordinated approach to studying ALS so that it can effectively direct ALS research initiatives. We also encourage the Department to partner on ALS research with other federal agencies, including the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke and the Department of Veterans Affairs, which has established a Veterans ALS Registry that has identified nearly 2,000 veterans with ALS.

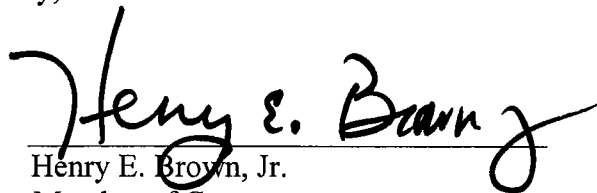
We strongly believe that this collaboration, combined with increased support from funds available to the Department, can help to determine why our veterans are more likely to die from ALS. As a result, we can help ensure that our nation takes appropriate action to protect the health and lives of our military men and women who each day risk their own lives in defense of this country. Importantly, research supported by the DOD, also will yield information and data about ALS that will benefit all people suffering from the disease and will help us make progress in finding a treatment and cure.

On behalf of our constituents and veterans with ALS across the country, we urge you to support this important research and look forward to working with you in support of our nation's servicemen and women and the greater ALS community.

Sincerely,



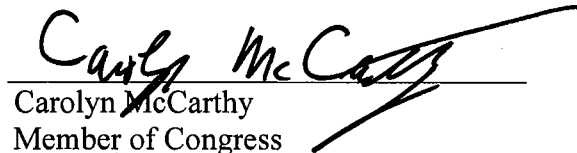
David E. Price
Member of Congress



Henry E. Brown, Jr.
Member of Congress



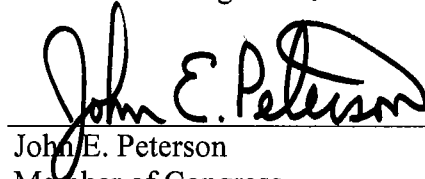
Jim Ramstad
Member of Congress



Carolyn McCarthy
Member of Congress



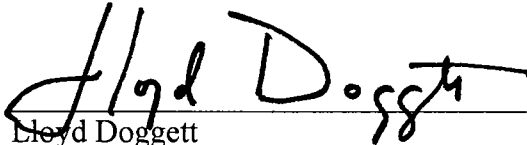
Charles W. Dent
Member of Congress




John E. Peterson
Member of Congress



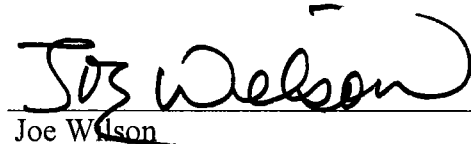
Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



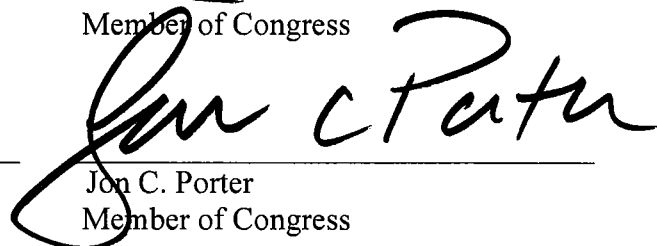
Ron Paul
Member of Congress



Joe Wilson
Member of Congress



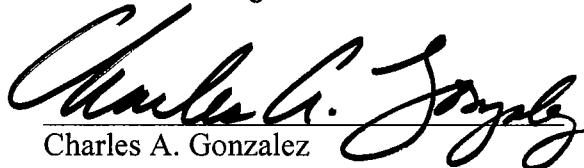
Joe Courtney
Member of Congress





Jon C. Porter
Member of Congress


Patrick T. McHenry
Member of Congress



Fortney Pete Stark
Member of Congress

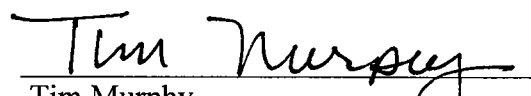

Charles A. Gonzalez
Member of Congress

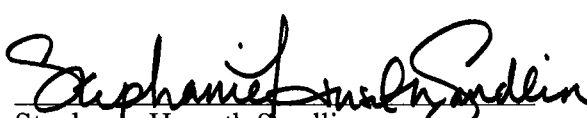

Jim Gerlach
Member of Congress

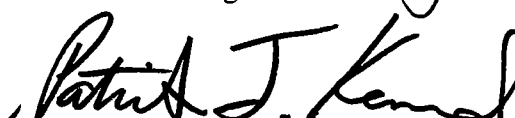

Ron Klein
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

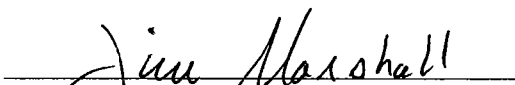

Melissa L. Bean
Member of Congress



Tim Murphy
Member of Congress

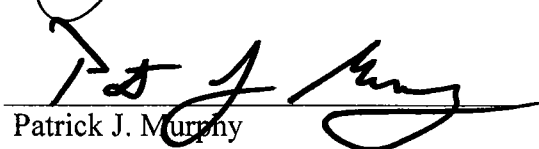

Stephanie Herseht Sandlin
Member of Congress


Patrick J. Kennedy
Member of Congress

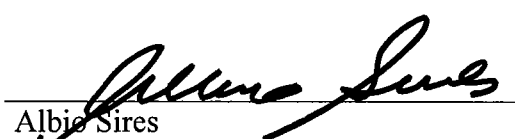

Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress

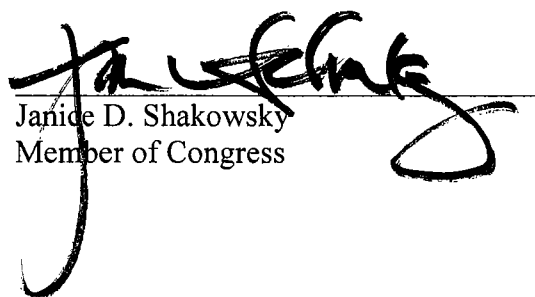

Jim Marshall
Member of Congress


David Davis
Member of Congress


Patrick J. Murphy
Member of Congress


Rush D. Holt
Member of Congress

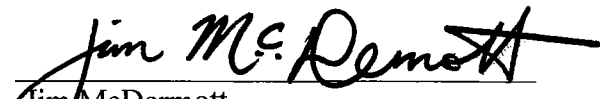

Albie Sires
Member of Congress


Janice D. Shakowsky
Member of Congress


Mark Steven Kirk
Member of Congress



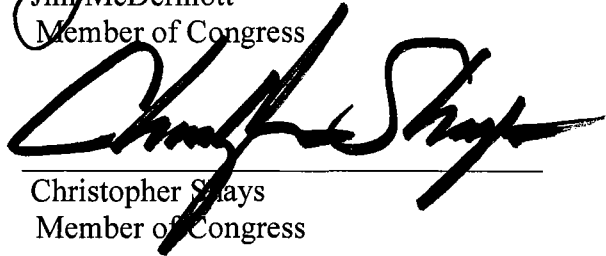
Todd Russell Platts
Member of Congress



Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



Lois Capps
Member of Congress



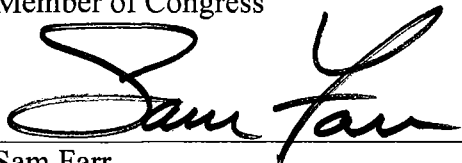
Christopher Stays
Member of Congress



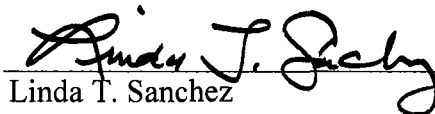
Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



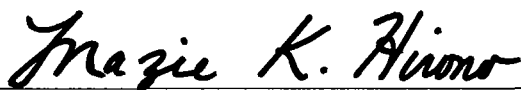
Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



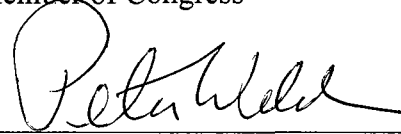
Sam Farr
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sanchez
Member of Congress



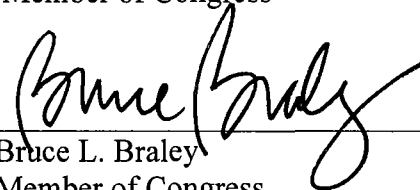
Mazie K. Hirono
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



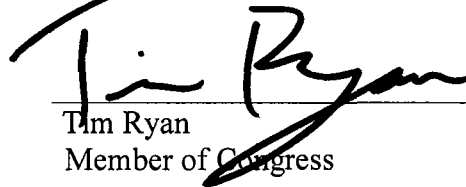
Ron Kind
Member of Congress



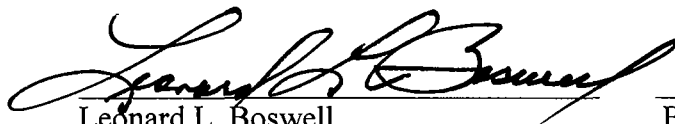
Bruce L. Braley
Member of Congress



Jason Altmire
Member of Congress



Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



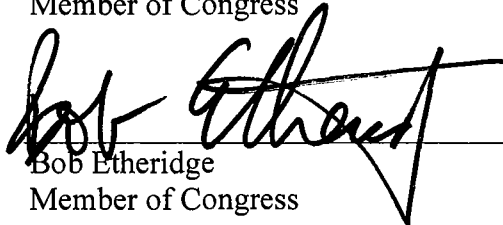
Leonard L. Boswell
Member of Congress



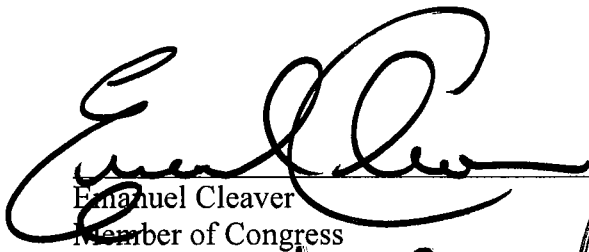
Ben Chandler
Member of Congress



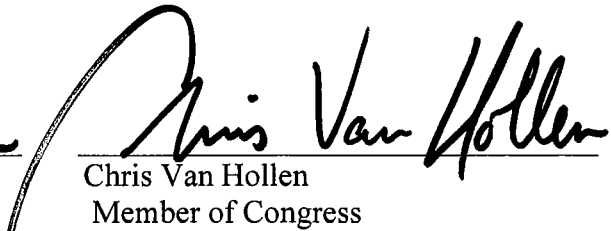
Timothy J. Walz
Member of Congress



Bob Etheridge
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



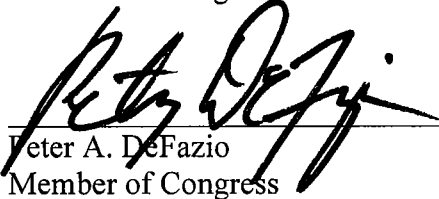
Nancy E. Boyda
Member of Congress



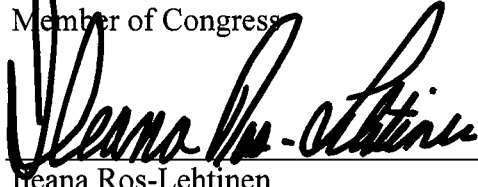
Brad Miller
Member of Congress



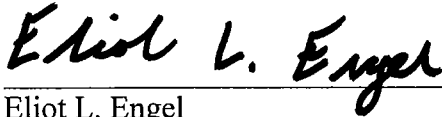
Dennis Moore
Member of Congress



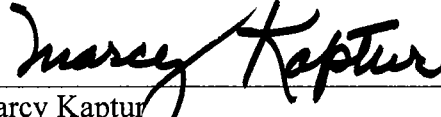
Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



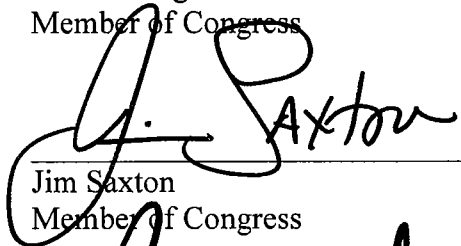
Heena Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



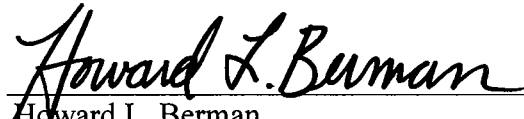
Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



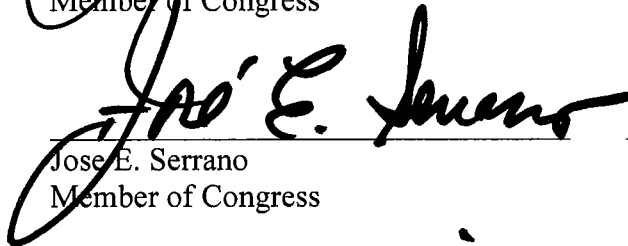
Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



Jim Saxton
Member of Congress



Howard L. Berman
Member of Congress



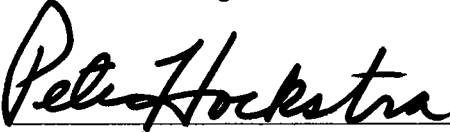
Jose E. Serrano
Member of Congress




Mark E. Souder
Member of Congress



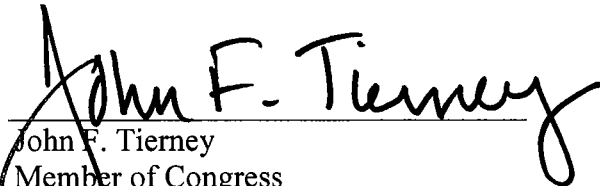
Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress



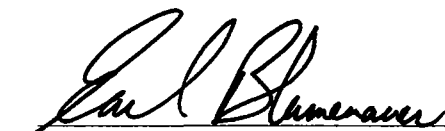
Peter Hoekstra
Member of Congress




Melvin L. Watt
Member of Congress

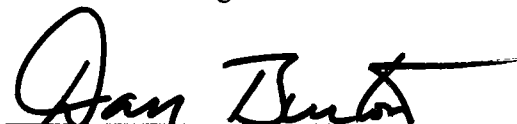


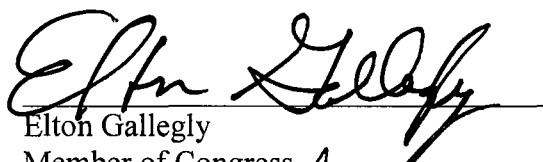
John F. Tierney
Member of Congress


Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

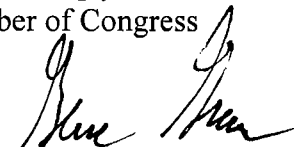

Gene Taylor
Member of Congress

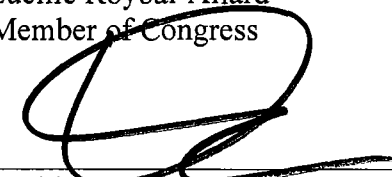

Steven R. Rothman
Member of Congress

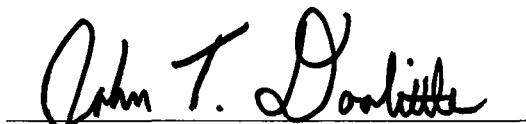

Dan Burton
Member of Congress

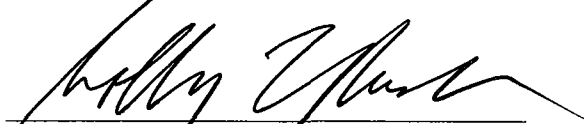

Elton Gallegly
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



Gene Green
Member of Congress


David Wu
Member of Congress



John T. Doolittle
Member of Congress

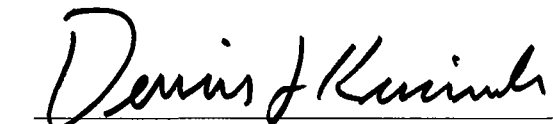

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

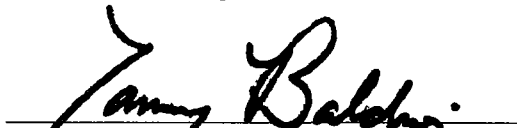

Tim Holden
Member of Congress

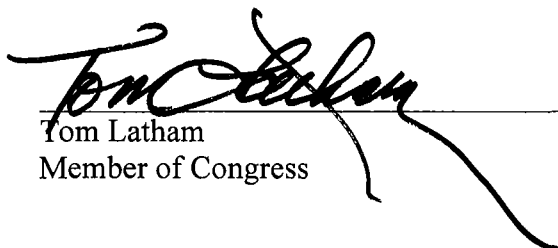

Frank A. LoBiondo
Member of Congress



Gary G. Miller
Member of Congress


Robert E. Andrews
Member of Congress


Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress

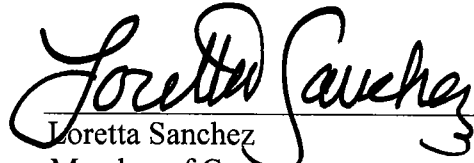

Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress


Tom Latham
Member of Congress


Julia Carson
Member of Congress



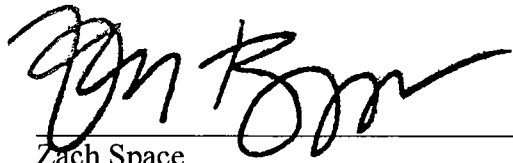
Ed Pastor
Member of Congress




Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress



Henry A. Waxman
Member of Congress



Zach Space
Member of Congress



Tom Davis
Member of Congress