Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 20, 2010

The Honorable John Spratt
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
207 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Spratt:

As members of the New Democratic Coalition, we are writing to express our strong support for President Obama's request for $58.5 billion in funding for State Department Operations and International Affairs programs as well as our support for funding the International Trade Administration in fiscal year 2011.
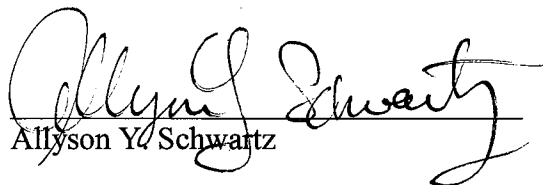
As you know, the International Affairs budget plays a critical role in strengthening our national security, as well as supporting global health, food security, education and democracy programs. Populations that struggle in poverty are more susceptible to destabilizing conflicts and terrorist organizations. Investment in economic development in developing countries holds enormous potential to lift people out of poverty. For this reason, the 9/11 Commission recommended that a comprehensive U.S. strategy to counter terrorism include economic policies, such as lowering trade barriers with the poorest Arab nations to encourage development, establish more open societies and create opportunities for people that will improve the lives of their families. The budget also plays a crucial role, however, in spurring U.S. economic growth and the creation of American jobs. Trade has tripled as a share of our national economy over the past four 40 years. In 2008, U.S. exports in goods and services generated $1.84 trillion for our economy. Today more than one in five U.S. jobs are tied to global trade. Moreover, the fastest growing markets for U.S. exports are developing countries – totaling nearly half of U.S. exports.
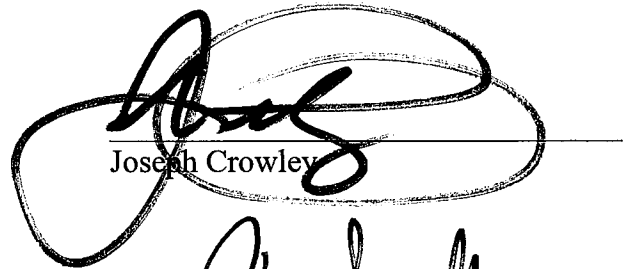
President Obama has prudently advocated increasing U.S. exports in an effort to support two million jobs. Our capacity to increasingly access emerging markets will play a significant role in achieving this goal. A robust International Affairs budget can help promote these global opportunities for American businesses and workers by supporting programs such as: the Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im Bank),which assists in the financing of U.S. goods and services to international markets; the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), which assists U.S. companies by providing financing (in the form of large structured finance loans to small businesses), political risk insurance and investment funds; the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), which promotes economic growth in developing and middle income countries, while simultaneously helping American businesses to export their products and services, thereby creating U.S. jobs.

This also helps bolster other critical initiatives such as the International Trade Administration (ITA), which funds domestic and international commercial officers and specialists that provide assistance to small and medium-sized businesses to help export their products overseas and create jobs here at home. The President's Budget also proposed $25 million for the ITA, which will finance 155 unfunded domestic and international commerce officers. These officers will help our businesses meet the President's goal of doubling U.S. exports over the next five years.
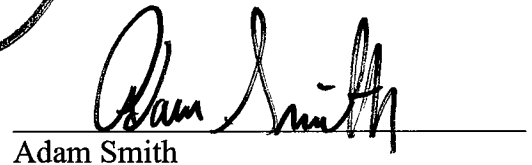
Expanding U.S. trade and helping American businesses remain competitive in the global marketplace are essential to our nation's security and prosperity. We urge you to support the President's budget request of $58.5 billion for foreign aid programs and his request for the ITA. We look forward to working with you to address these concerns in drafting a fiscally responsible budget resolution.
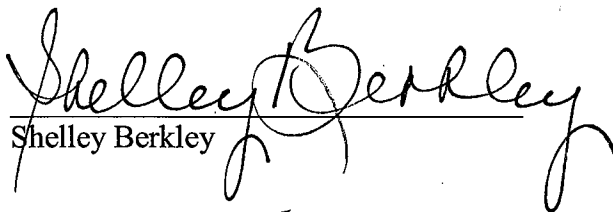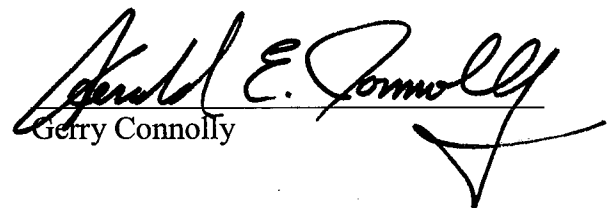
Sincerely,
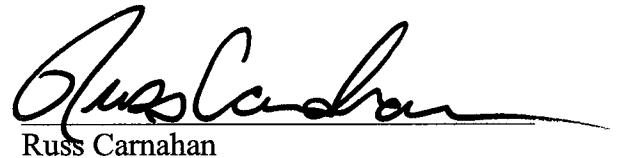
Allyson Y. Schwartz
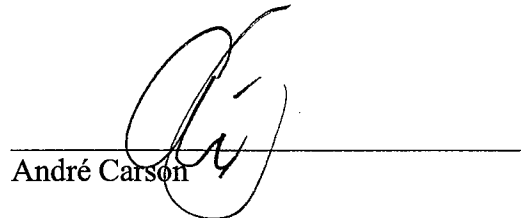
Ron Kind

Shelley Berkley

André Carson

Joe Courtney

Joseph Crowley

Adam Smith
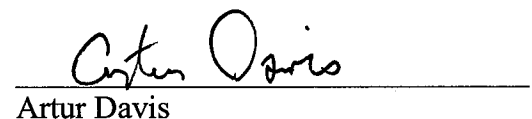
Russ Carnahan
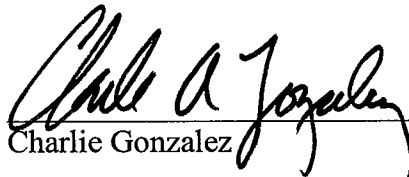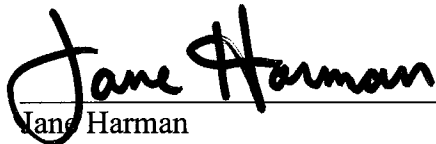
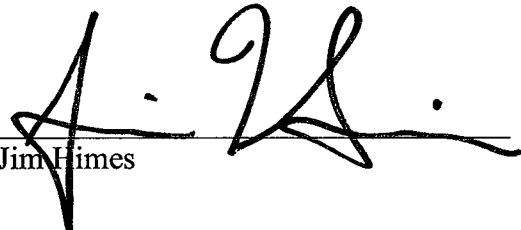Gerry Connolly

Artur Davis

Bob Etheridge
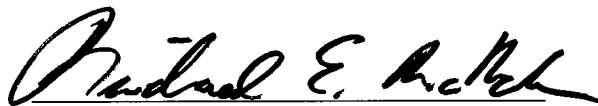
Charlie Gonzalez
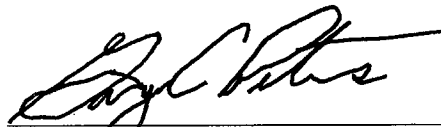
Jane Harman

Martin Heinrich

Jim Himes

Rush Holt

Ron Klein

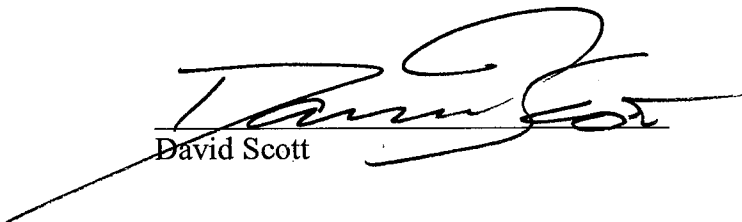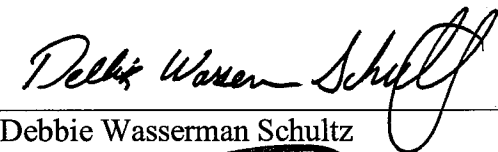Mike McMahon

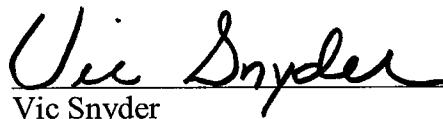Gregory Meeks

Dennis Moore

Jim Moran

Gary Peters

Laura Richardson

David Scott

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Vic Snyder

David Wu