

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2008

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,  
and Related Programs  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Judd Gregg  
Ranking Minority Member  
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,  
and Related Programs  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Gregg:

We write to thank the Subcommittee for its commitment to peace-building programs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that promote people-to-people coexistence and reconciliation around the world, and particularly in the Middle East. Nowhere is the work of bringing people together in peace more desperately needed than in the Middle East. In these uncertain times, people-to-people contacts are even more critical. As a result, we urge the Subcommittee to continue funding for a new grant program instituted last year for Middle East coexistence.

As we have all long recognized, the Arab-Israeli conflict remains a focus of U.S. security and foreign policy. NGOs laying the groundwork for peace between Israelis and Palestinians have demonstrated success, which justifies our investment in supporting their work. Several years ago the U.S. provided \$10 million for the very successful Wye River People-to-People Exchange Program. These funds, and subsequent grants to Israeli-Palestinian NGOs under USAID's global reconciliation account, have demonstrated the impact of bringing together ordinary Israeli and Palestinian citizens to work jointly on such efforts as educational programs, business cooperation, sports activities, recreation centers, healthcare initiatives, community development, and inter-religious dialogue.

This "track two diplomacy" is a critical U.S. foreign policy tool in addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict and improving America's image in the region. Therefore, we urge the Subcommittee to continue support for these efforts by dedicating \$11 million to people-to-people activities between Israelis and Palestinians, Arabs and Jews in the Middle East through the authorized Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Reconciliation and Democracy Fund. Because these types of programs hold promise in other hot-spots, we believe it is important that this program be supported without diminishing other funds focused on other conflicts around the world.

We can help lay the groundwork for peace by helping Israelis and Palestinians of good will reach across conflict lines through "people-to-people" coexistence NGOs. Please support their brave and inspiring peace-building and reconciliation efforts by including \$11 million in the FY 2009 Foreign Operations Appropriations bill for people-to-people reconciliation programs involving the Arab-Israeli conflict. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

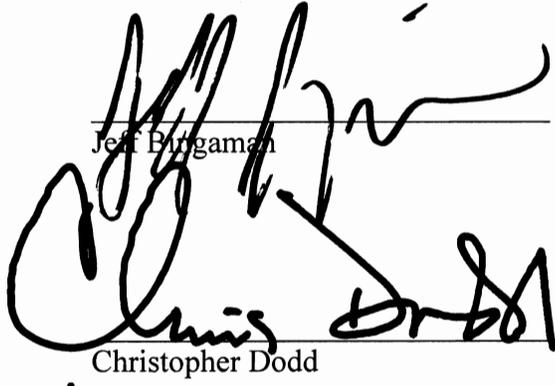
  
John E. Sununu

  
Joseph R. Biden, Jr

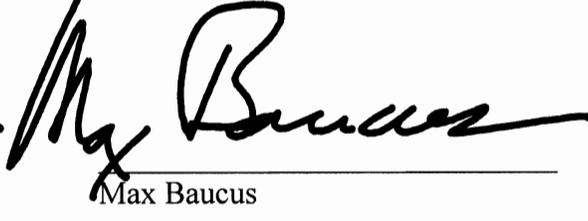
  
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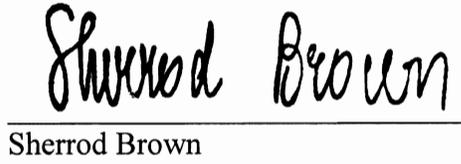
  
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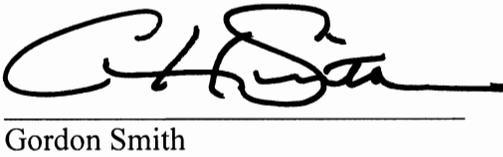
  
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Chuck Hagel

  
Max Baucus

  
Pat Roberts

  
Sherrod Brown

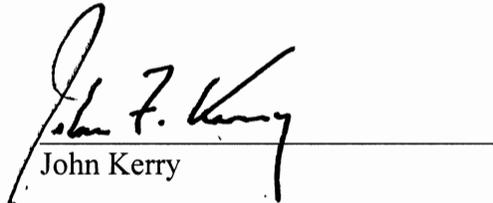
  
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Joe Lieberman

  
Edward Kennedy

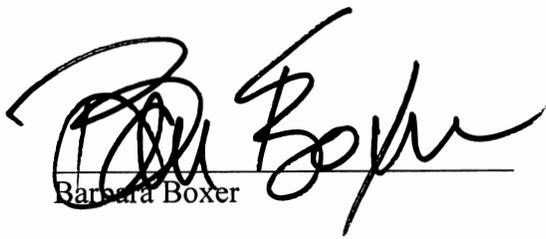
  
Bernie Sanders

  
Dianne Feinstein

  
John Kerry

  
Daniel Akaka

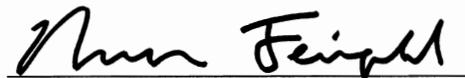
  
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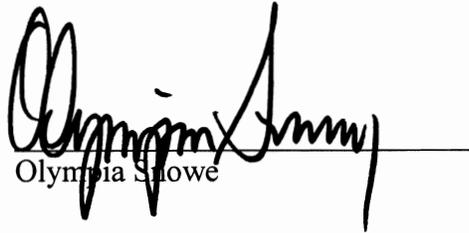
  
Barbara Boxer

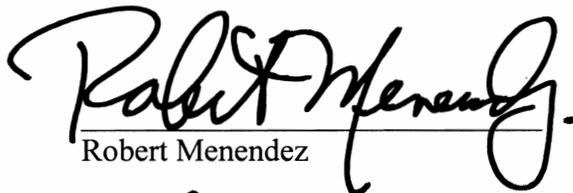
  
Bill Nelson

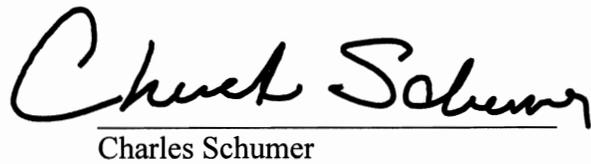
  
Debbie Stabenow

  
Sheldon Whitehouse

  
Russ Feingold

  
Olympia Snowe

  
Robert Menendez

  
Charles Schumer

  
Frank Lautenberg

  
Ron Wyden