

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 30, 2017

The Honorable John Culberson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable José Serrano
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Culberson and Ranking Member Serrano:

In response to the Administration's proposed elimination of the Marine Mammal Commission, we write to urge the Subcommittee to fully fund the Commission in the total amount of \$4.68 million in the Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations bill. Funding the Commission at this level would enable it to continue to provide practical solutions for the protection of marine mammals, and sufficient grants for research in this area.

The Marine Mammal Commission is an independent federal agency established by Congress, and is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The Commission provides independent, science-based oversight of U.S. policies, international policies, and the actions of federal agencies regarding human impacts on marine mammals and their ocean environment. The Commission has very important long-term and current connections to California and Alaska. Marine mammals bring immense value to these regions. From sea lions, to gray whales, and humpback whales, these animals are beloved by locals and attract thousands of visitors annually.

The Commission also undertakes a range of activities to ensure that protections for marine mammals—dolphins, seals, sea lions, walrus, polar bears, and manatees—are as effective and efficient as possible. Specifically, in California, the Commission played a critical role in the recovery of sea otters and gray whales, which are now doing well in the region. Additionally, it works with the regulatory agencies and stakeholders to identify and fill research needs, providing grant funding when possible for research that addresses information gaps and identifies regulatory approaches that are more tailored.

Additionally, the Commission works to enhance the tribal consultation process between Alaska Native organizations and federal agencies by assisting in the development of procedures regarding policies, regulations, legislation, or other federal actions that have tribal implications. It also seeks to ensure that Alaska Natives are able to meet their subsistence needs through hunting of marine mammals by working to maintain viable marine mammal populations in the Arctic.

Since FY15, the Commission has been funded at the flat level of \$3.43 million. Due to rising fixed costs, the Commission has absorbed significant essential costs (salaries, rent, etc.) and thereby reduced their discretionary funding by 40% (\$1.34 million). Providing \$4.68 million in funding to the Commission in FY18 would enable it to return to the level of discretionary funding it had in FY15, and enable it to fulfill its obligations as outlined in the MMPA.

The Marine Mammal Commission remains committed to researching and protecting our marine life at a time where we face immediate marine mammal extinctions, and the proposed elimination of the Commission would have an irreversible impact on our marine ecosystems. We appreciate your support for the Marine Mammal Commission, and ask that you strongly support this budget item as we recommend in your Fiscal Year 2018 Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations Bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.


Sincerely,



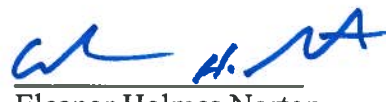
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Don Young
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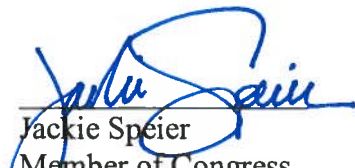
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



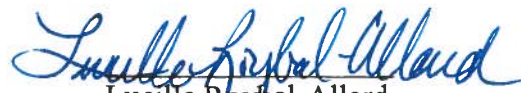
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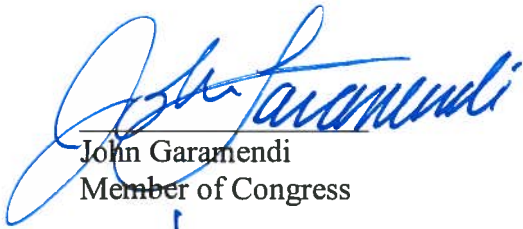
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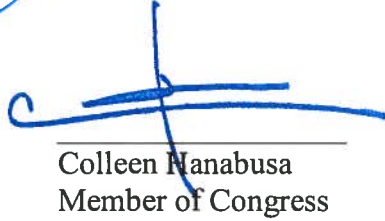


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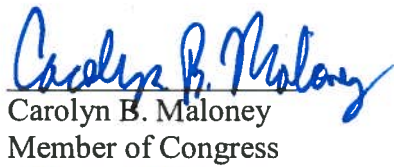


Barbara Lee
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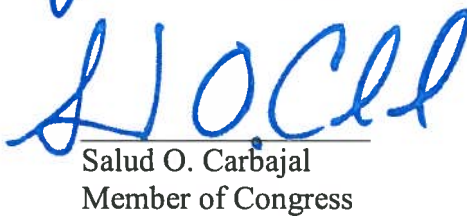

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Colleen Hanabusa
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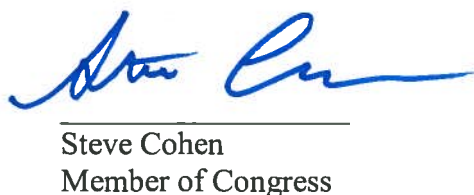

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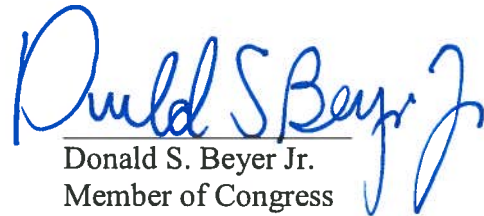

Carolyn B. Maloney
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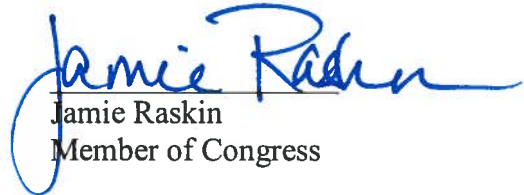

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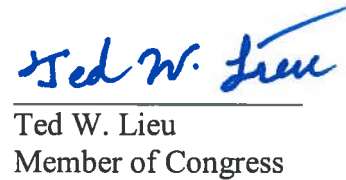

Salud O. Carbajal
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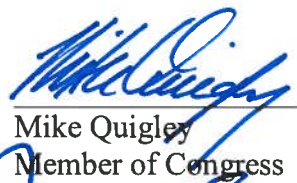

Nydia M. Velázquez
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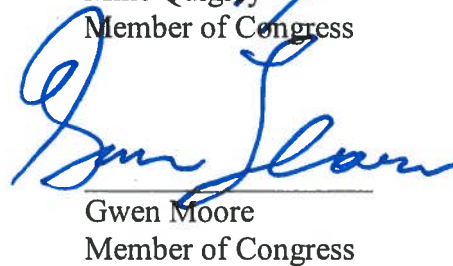

Steve Cohen
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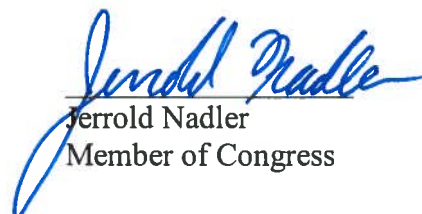

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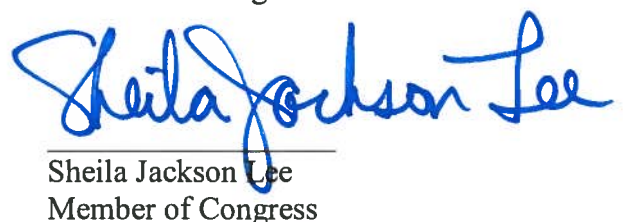

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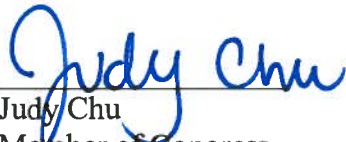
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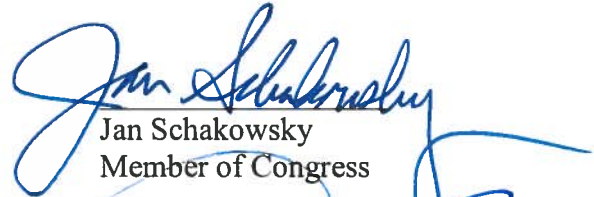
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Member of Congress



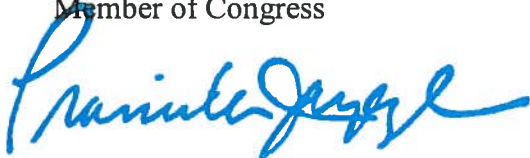
Darren Soto
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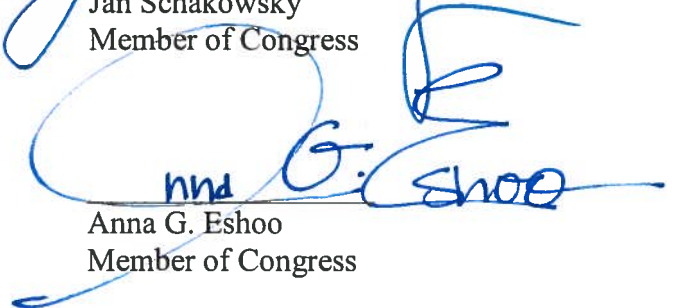
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