

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2006

His Excellency Saparmurad A. Niyazov
President
Republic of Turkmenistan
Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Dear President Niyazov:

We write today to express our deep concern about the continued confinement in a psychiatric hospital of 64-year-old prisoner of conscience Gurbandurdy Durdykuliev as punishment for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. Considering that Turkmenistan is a participating State in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and that you personally signed the Helsinki Final Act when Turkmenistan freely joined, we are gravely troubled by the extreme punishment for his peaceful activities and respectfully ask for his immediate and unconditional release.

On January 3, 2004, Mr. Durdykuliev sent letters both to you and to a regional governor, requesting authorization for a peaceful demonstration to take place the following month on the main square of Balkanabad. The demonstrators were going to protest government policies and urge authorities to alter those policies.

On February 14, 2004, Mr. Durdykuliev was taken from his home in Suvchy and forcibly confined to a psychiatric hospital in Balkanabad. Shortly afterwards he was transferred across the country to a psychiatric hospital in Garashsyzyk District, where he was diagnosed as suffering from "wild paranoia in an aggressive form." However, several medical staff of the hospital in Garashsyzyk reportedly told Mr. Durdykuliev's relatives that they had not found any sign of mental illness but that authorities had pressured them to diagnose him as mentally ill. He is believed to be in a poor state of health, suffering from fever, severe stomach pains, and the aftereffects of a heart attack.

While your government may not have welcomed the comments of Mr. Durdykuliev, international standards recognize his right to make such non-violent observations. Freedom of expression is protected under the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and under various OSCE commitments.

We are troubled to see a return in Turkmenistan to the forced psychiatric confinement of political dissidents – a practice that was a despicable hallmark of oppression during the Soviet era. We urge you to take a public stand against this practice and order the immediate and unconditional release of Gurbandurdy Durdykuliev. We thank you in advance for your assistance with this serious matter.

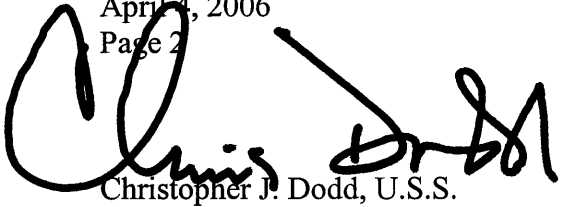
Sincerely,



Sam Brownback, U.S.S.



Christopher H. Smith, M.C.

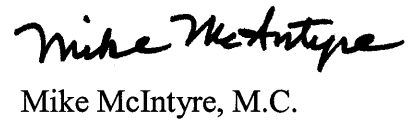

Christopher J. Dodd, U.S.S.


Benjamin L. Cardin, M.C.


Elizabeth Dole, U.S.S.


Joseph R. Pitts, M.C.

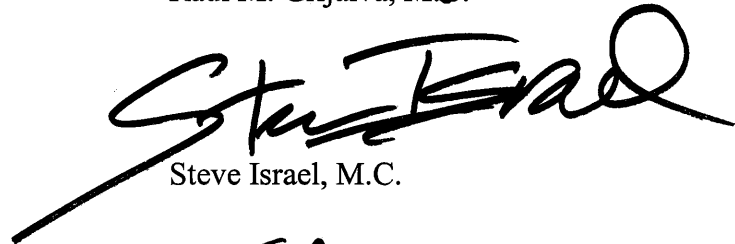

Joseph I. Lieberman, U.S.S.


Mike McIntyre, M.C.


Patrick J. Leahy, U.S.S.


Raúl M. Grijalva, M.C.


Richard Durbin, U.S.S.


Steve Israel, M.C.

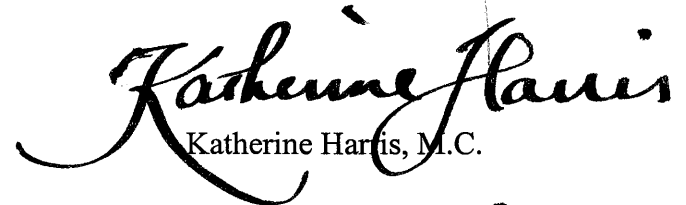

Norm Coleman, U.S.S.


Todd W. Akin, M.C.

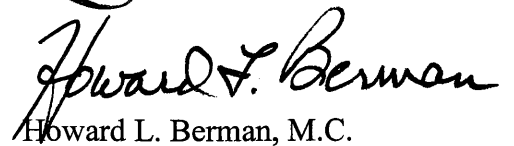

Chuck Hagel, U.S.S.


Thaddeus G. McCotter, M.C.


Lincoln D. Chafee, U.S.S.

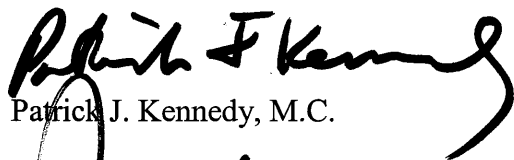

Katherine Harris, M.C.


Mike DeWine, U.S.S.


Howard L. Berman, M.C.


Carl Levin, U.S.S.


Ben Nelson, U.S.S.



Patrick J. Kennedy, M.C.



Fortney Pete Stark, M.C.


Thomas H. Allen, M.C.

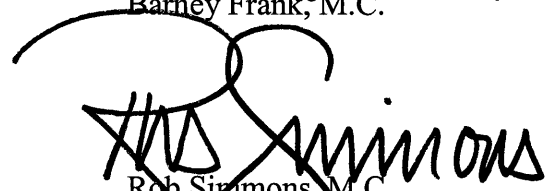

Mark Steven Kirk, M.C.


James A. Leach, M.C.


Todd Tiahrt, M.C.


Jo Ann Davis, M.C.


Barney Frank, M.C.

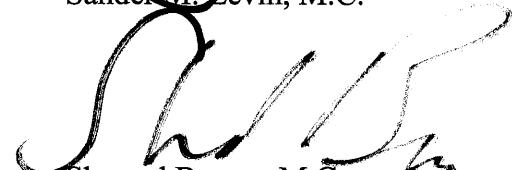

Rob Simmons, M.C.


Tom Udall, M.C.


Michael R. McNulty, M.C.

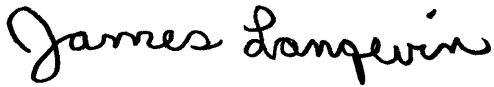

Dana Rohrabacher, M.C.


Sander M. Levin, M.C.


Sherrod Brown, M.C.


Anne M. Northup, M.C.

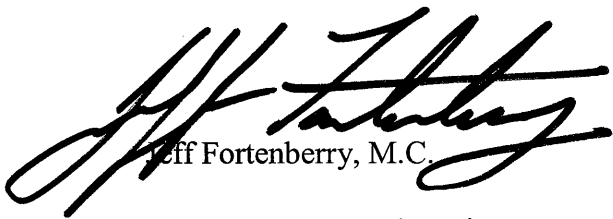

Lloyd Doggett, M.C.



James R. Langevin, M.C.



Geoff Davis, M.C.



Jeff Fortenberry, M.C.



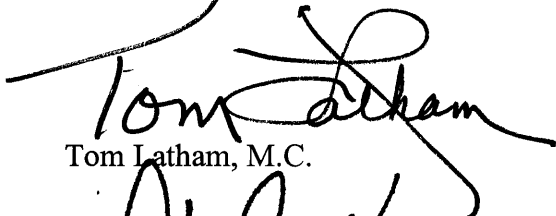
Frank A. LoBiondo, M.C.



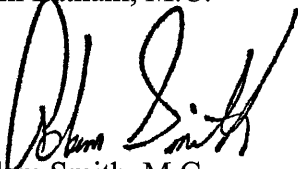
Tom Davis, M.C.



William Lacy Clay, M.C.



Tom Latham, M.C.



Adam Smith, M.C.



Lane Evans, M.C.



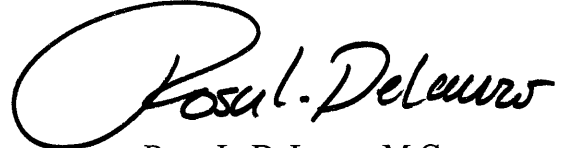
Jim McDermott, M.C.



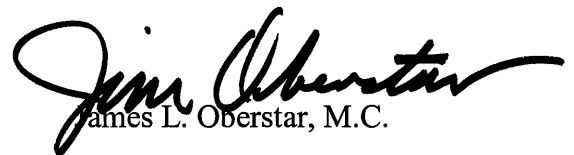
Daniel E. Lungren, M.C.



Virginia Foxx, M.C.



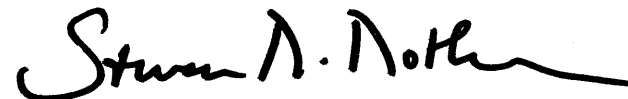
Rosa L. DeLauro, M.C.



James L. Oberstar, M.C.



Mark Udall, M.C.



Steven R. Rothman, M.C.