Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 2, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We are deeply concerned by the recent arrests in Turkey of members of the Turkish media. A strong democracy requires both tolerance and transparency in order to thrive, but this decision by the Turkish government to intimidate, arrest, and smother voices opposed to the government is a threat to the very democratic principles that Turkey claims to hold dear.

According to multiple press reports, Ekrem Dumanli, editor-in-chief of Zaman, a highly circulated daily newspaper in Turkey, and Hidayet Karaca, CEO of Samanyolu Media Group were arrested on December 14, 2014, on questionable charges bringing the total number of detained press and media personalities to 29. These members of the media have ties to the Islamic scholar Fethullah Gulen, a known critic of the Erdogan Administration. Unfortunately, Hidayet Karaca is still in detention awaiting trial.

One year prior to these arrests, allegations of corruption were levied at the Erdogan administration. Subsequently, some 400 people (including 150 stated Gulen supporters) were monitored on Twitter and ultimately Turkish access to the social media was blocked. In addition to previous attempts to silence the opposition, these recent arrests have had a chilling effect on freedom, democracy, and economic prosperity for all of Turkey.

As a result, we strongly urge you to reach out to President Erdogan and his administration to encourage a peaceful and appropriate resolution to these cases. A free media must be supported and protected to foster an environment open to constructive political discussion and to ensure freedom of expression for all the Turkish people.

As a strategic ally to the United States in the Middle East, and key member of NATO, we wish to see the Turkish government abandon this course of intimidation and embrace a free press and tolerance of dissenting voices. It is our priority to encourage the Turkish government to fulfill the responsibilities and obligations to their own people.

Sincerely,

Matt Salmon
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver II
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Luis Gutiérrez
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Barbara Lee
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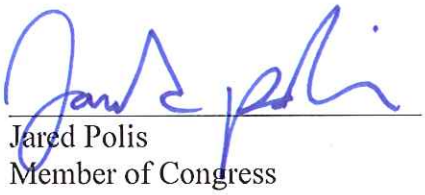

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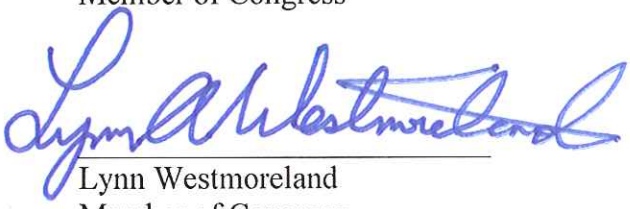

Lynn Westmoreland
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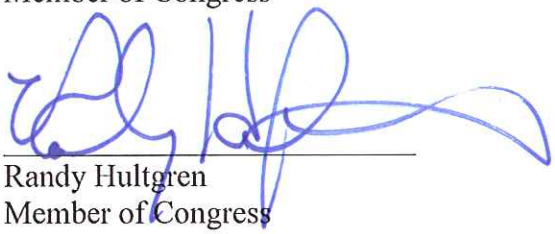

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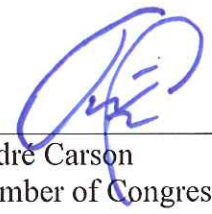

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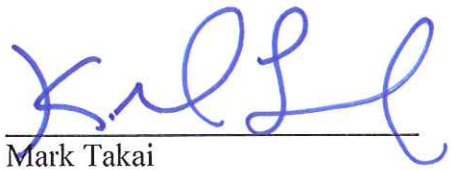

Mark Takai
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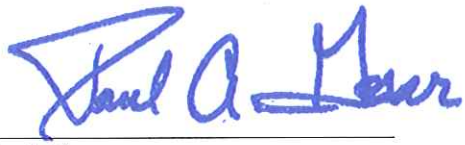

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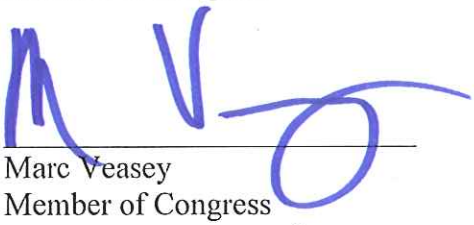

Marc Veasey
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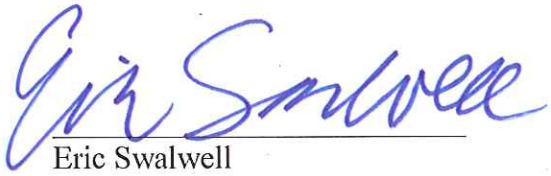

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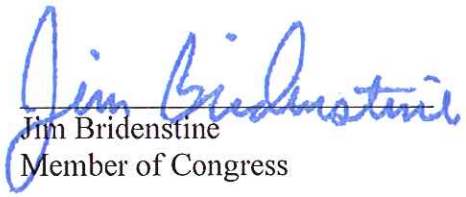

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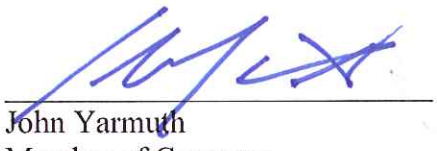

John Yarmuth
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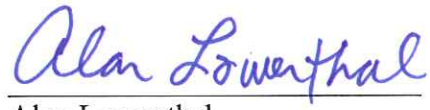

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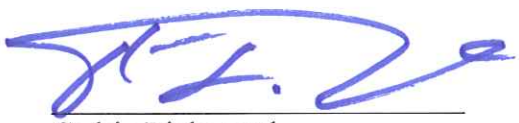

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