

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 30, 2017

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
HT-2, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

Thank you for including \$196.9 million for Conventional Weapons Destruction (CWD) programs in the Fiscal Year 2018 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill and for encouraging the Secretary of State to continue to support CWD programs in Laos. We appreciate the committee's efforts to ensure the U.S. maintains a leadership role in this issue. As you may be aware, the Senate, State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs bill included \$30 million specifically for CWD in Laos. We request that you support retaining the current Senate language in conference.

Congress has specifically recognized the responsibility of the U.S. to prioritize the "clearance of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in areas where such ordnance was caused by the United States." In one of the most enduring, yet least well-known, legacies of the Vietnam War, UXO from the nine-year U.S. bombing campaign over Laos is still endangering villagers as they go about their daily lives. Between 1964 and 1973, more than 270 million cluster bomblets were dropped on Laos – more than was dropped on Germany and Japan combined during the Second World War. The U.S. flew in excess of 580,000 bombing missions over Laos, the equivalent of one bombing mission every 8 minutes around the clock for nine years. Less than one percent of the estimated 80 million leftover bombs in Laos have been cleared, resulting in over 20,000 casualties since the war ended in 1975. On a per capita basis, Laos is the most heavily bombed country in history.

UXO in Laos continues to impede development in one of the poorest countries in the Asia Pacific. The UN Development Program has reported that "UXO/mine action is the absolute pre-condition for the socio-economic development of Lao[s]," and that because of UXO

“economic opportunities in tourism, hydroelectric power, mining, forestry and many other areas of activity considered main engines of growth for Laos are restricted, complicated, and made more expensive.” Development and poverty reduction efforts are hindered by the tens of millions of unexploded cluster bomblets littering forests, rice fields, villages, school grounds, roads, and other populated areas.

This dark chapter in history continues to threaten the lives and livelihood of the Lao people, many of whom were born two generations after the war ended. In 2016, the United States pledged \$90 million over three years in continued assistance to help Laos heal from the legacy of war. Our request to include the \$30 million allocated by the Senate for CWD in Laos is consistent with that pledge.

Ensuring that Laos receives the \$30 million commitment for FY 2018 sends a strong message to the world that the U.S. delivers on its promises. As you know, China continues to expand its influence throughout Southeast Asia, it’s critical that we enhance, not hinder, the role of the U.S. in the region. We cannot afford to jeopardize our leadership role by failing to deliver on our promises.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



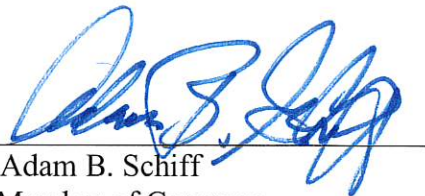
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Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



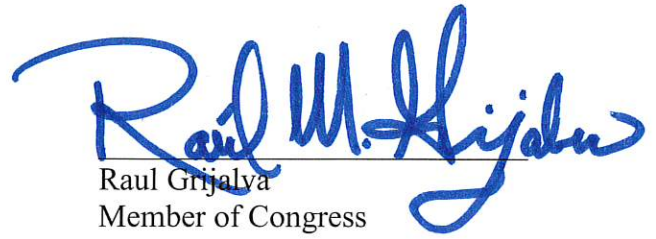
Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress



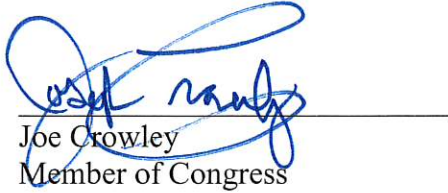
Anna G. Eshoo
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Don Beyer
Member of Congress



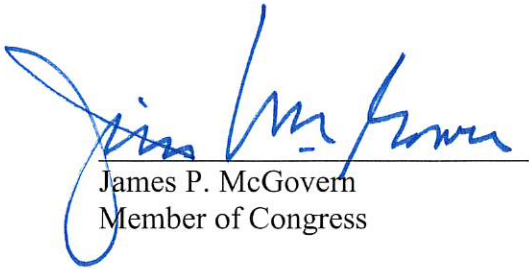
Raul Grijalva
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Joe Crowley
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
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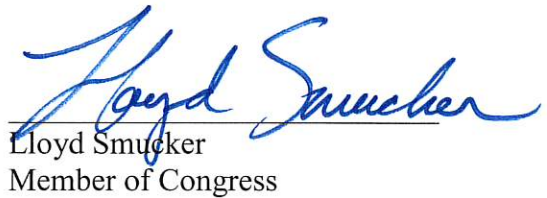
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



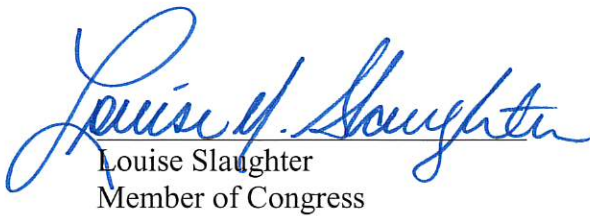
Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



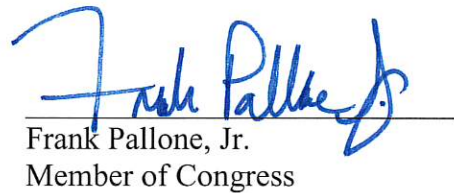
Mark Pocan
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Lloyd Smucker
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Louise Slaughter
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