

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 18th, 2015

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of House of Representatives
H-232 Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

We write to urge you to postpone your invitation to Prime Minister Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress in March. Israel is a valued ally and Israeli Prime Ministers have a long history of addressing Congress. As members of Congress who support Israel, we share concern that it appears that you are using a foreign leader as a political tool against the President. We very much appreciate that Prime Minister Netanyahu has twice had the honor of speaking before a joint session.

However, at this time your invitation is contrary to the standards by which our Congress operates and has the potential to harm U.S. Foreign policy.

The timing of this invitation and lack of coordination with the White House indicate that this is not an ordinary diplomatic visit. Rather this appears to be an attempt to promote new sanctions legislation against Iran that could undermine critical negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran. At the State of the Union President Obama made it clear that he will veto new Iran sanctions legislation. The invitation to Prime Minister Netanyahu enlists a foreign leader to influence a Presidential policy initiative. We should be able to disagree on foreign policy within our American political system and without undermining the presidency.

Aside from being improper, this places Israel, a close and valued ally, in the middle of a policy debate between Congress and the White House. We should not turn our diplomatic friendship into a partisan issue. Beyond threatening our diplomatic priorities, the timing of this invitation offers the Congressional platform to elevate a candidate in a foreign election.

A visit from Israel's Prime Minister would normally be an occasion for bipartisan cooperation and support. Our relationship with Israel is too important to use as a pawn

in political gamesmanship. We strongly urge you to postpone this invitation until Israelis have cast their ballots and the deadline for diplomatic negotiations with Iran has passed. When the Israeli Prime Minister visits us outside the specter of partisan politics, we will be delighted and honored to greet him or her on the Floor of the House.


Sincerely,



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



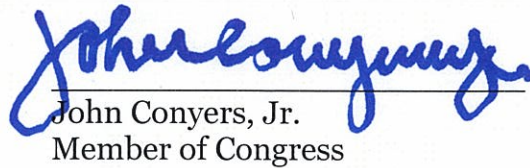
Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



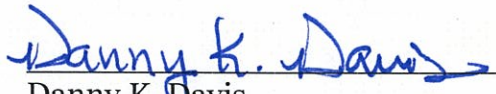
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



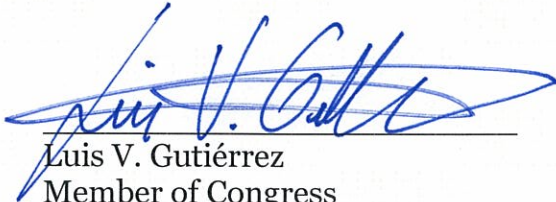
John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress



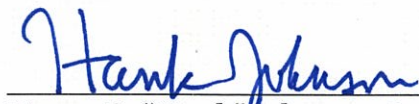
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress



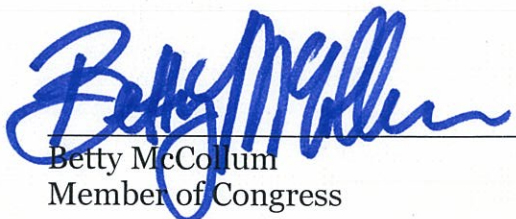
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



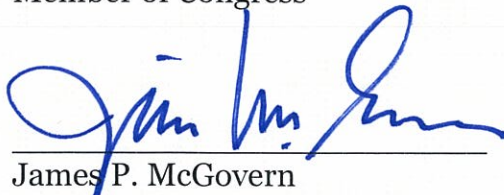
Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



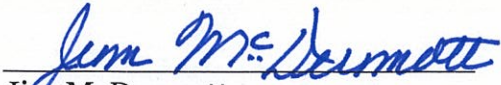
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



Beto O'Rourke
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



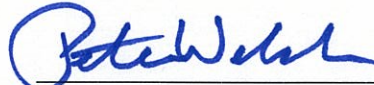
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



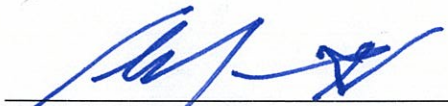
Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



John A. Yarmuth
Member of Congress