

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 19, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you prepare to attend the United Nations General Assembly, we write to address the issue of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. At a time of great challenges in the Middle East, we are disappointed that talks between Israelis and Palestinians remain stalled. The only way to resolve the conflicts between the two is through direct negotiations that lead to a sustainable two-state solution with a future state of Palestine living in peace and security with Israel. This outcome would provide Israel with greater security and strengthen regional stability. We remain optimistic that, under the right circumstances, Israelis and Palestinians can successfully resume productive negotiations toward this goal.

At this delicate stage the international community should both provide hope to the parties and avoid taking action that would harm the prospects for meaningful progress. Even well-intentioned initiatives at the United Nations (UN) risk locking the parties into positions that will make it more difficult to return to the negotiating table and make the compromises necessary for peace. The United States remains an indispensable trusted mediator between the parties, and we must continue to insist that neither we nor any other outsider substitute for the parties to the conflict.

Your administration has consistently upheld the longstanding U.S. policy of opposing – and if necessary vetoing – one-sided UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. As U.S. Ambassador to the UN, the Honorable Susan Rice summarized your Administration’s position well when she exercised America’s veto on a February 2011 resolution: “It is the Israelis’ and Palestinians’ conflict, and even the best-intentioned outsiders cannot resolve it for them. Therefore every potential action must be measured against one overriding standard: will it move the parties closer to negotiations and an agreement? Unfortunately, this draft resolution risks hardening the positions of both sides. It could encourage the parties to stay out of negotiations and, if and when they did resume, to return to the Security Council whenever they reach an impasse.”

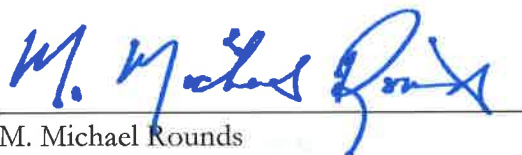
Mr. President, you also clearly stated in your September 2011 address to the General Assembly, “Peace will not come through statements and resolutions at the United Nations – if it were that easy, it would have been accomplished by now. Ultimately, it is the Israelis and the Palestinians who must live side by side. Ultimately, it is the Israelis and the Palestinians – not us — who must reach agreement on the issues that divide them. . . . Ultimately, peace depends upon compromise among people who must live together long after our speeches are over, long after our votes have been tallied.”

We could not agree more with these statements. We urge you to continue longstanding U.S. policy and make it clear that you will veto any one-sided UNSC resolution that may be offered in the coming months. Any such resolution, whether focused on settlements or other final status issues, will ultimately make it more difficult for Israelis and Palestinians to resolve the conflict.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



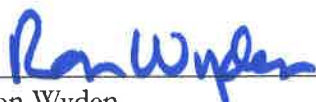
Roy Blunt
United States Senator



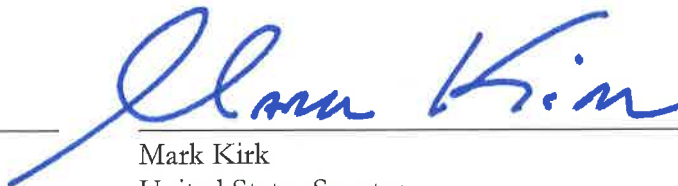
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Susan Collins
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Mark Kirk
United States Senator



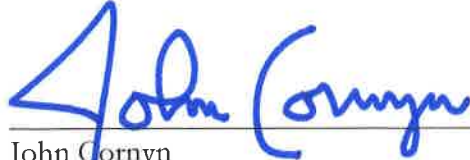
Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



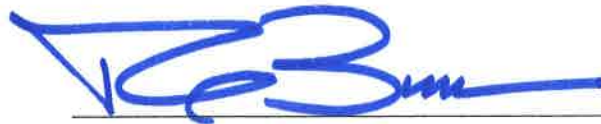
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



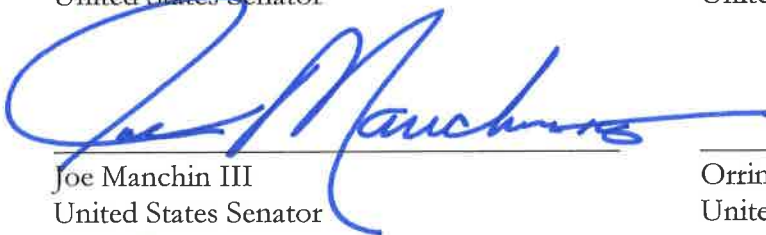
Michael Lee
United States Senator



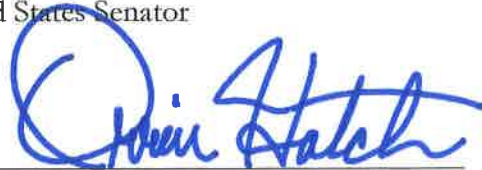
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Richard Burr
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



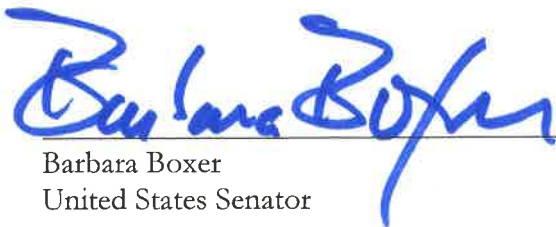
Orrin Hatch
United States Senator



Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Cory Gardner
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



John Boozman
United States Senator

Barbara A. Mikulski

Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator

John McCain

John McCain
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

Dan Coats

Dan Coats
United States Senator

Ben Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Michael B. Enzi

Mike Enzi
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Chuck Grassley

Chuck Grassley
United States Senator

Jon Tester

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Dean Heller

Dean Heller
United States Senator

Robert Menendez

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Johnny Isakson

Johnny Isakson
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Pat Roberts

Pat Roberts
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Pat Toomey

Pat Toomey
United States Senator

Bob Casey, Jr.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

John Barrasso

John Barrasso, M.D.
United States Senator

Joe Donnelly

Joe Donnelly
United States Senator

Deb Fischer

Deb Fischer
United States Senator

Angus King

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

John Thune

John Thune
United States Senator

C.A.B.

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Tim Scott

Tim Scott
United States Senator

Al Franken

Al Franken
United States Senator

David Perdue

David Perdue
United States Senator

Heidi Heitkamp

Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senator

James Risch

James Risch
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Jerry Moran

Jerry Moran
United States Senator

Tom Udall

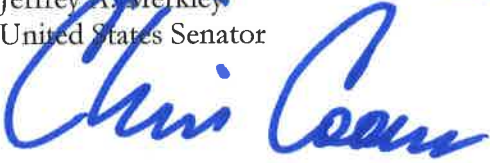
Tom Udall
United States Senator

Lindsay O. Graham

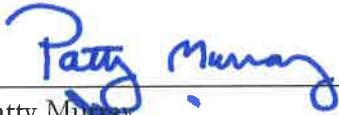
Lindsay O. Graham
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



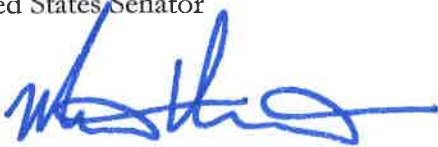
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Claire McCaskill
United States Senator



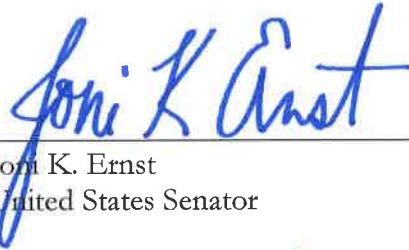
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



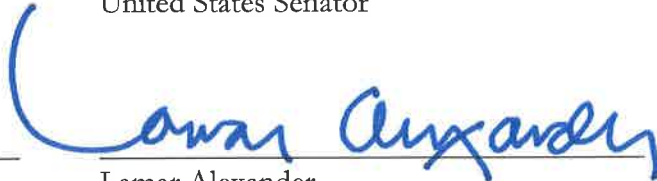
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator




Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



David Vitter
United States Senator



Lamar Alexander
United States Senator



Jeff Sessions
United States Senator



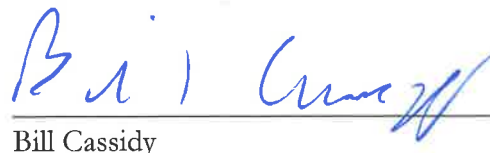
Roger Wicker
United States Senator



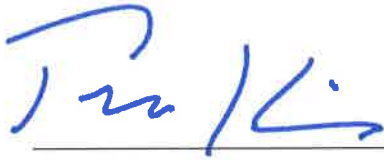
Thad Cochran
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



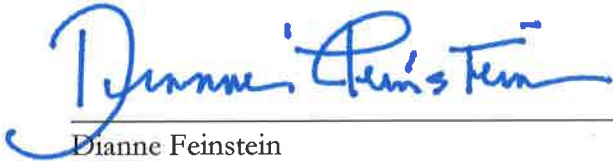
Bill Cassidy
United States Senator



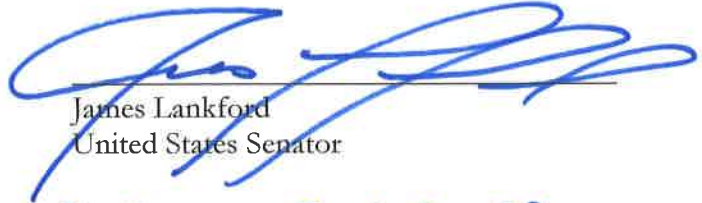
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Mitch McConnell
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



James Lankford
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



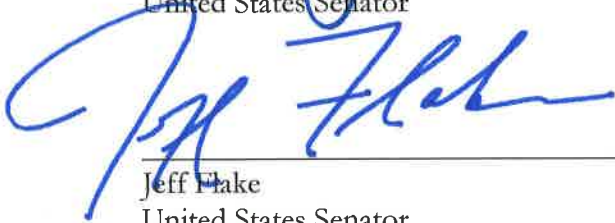
Richard Shelby
United States Senator



Ron Johnson
United States Senator



John Hoeven
United States Senator



Jeff Flake
United States Senator



Steve Daines
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Rob Portman
United States Senator