

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 12, 2013

His Excellency V.B. Rybak  
Chairman, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine  
01008, Kyiv-8, 5 Hrushevskoho Street  
Ukraine

Dear Chairman Rybak:

We are writing today because we are concerned that the Ukrainian government has been moving away from respect for the fundamental and universal freedoms of assembly and expression.

We support the ability of all Ukrainian citizens to exercise these civil and political rights, and we condemn bills that would create an environment of state-sponsored discrimination against any minority group, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. We view the initiatives to prohibit the “propaganda of same-sex sexual relations” as exemplary of increasing government pressure on the freedoms of expression and reflective of a disturbing lack of tolerance. As Members of the Congress of the United States, we are concerned about draft Laws No. 1155 and 8711 which would prohibit propaganda of same-sex sexual relations in order to protect the “physical, mental, spiritual, moral and intellectual development” of children. In addition, the draft bills establish criminal liability for portrayals in the media, demonstrations, or public gatherings aimed at “distributing any positive information about same-sex relationships,” with sanctions of up to six years in prison.


We are deeply troubled that these bills would lead to violations of fundamental freedoms of assembly and expression that both of our countries value and that are central to accepted understandings of what constitutes a strong and vibrant society. If passed, the bills would further threaten the health of Ukrainians by restricting their access to accurate information about HIV and AIDS. Moreover, recent violence against prominent LGBT rights activists shows how discriminatory laws can fuel hateful attacks and violence.

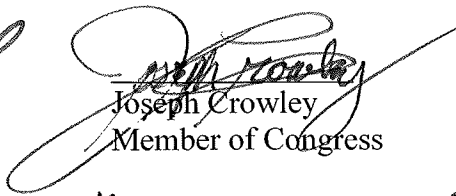
We further believe that these laws do not respect human rights commitments Ukraine has made, including by joining the Council of Europe and ratifying the United Nations’ Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, nor are they consistent with Ukraine’s own Constitution. We are especially concerned that, as Ukraine assumes chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), it is considering laws which clearly undermine OSCE efforts to combat discrimination and intolerance. As Ukraine assumes a leadership role at the OSCE, we believe it should take extra efforts to live up to the human dimension commitments of the organization and to encourage all OSCE members to uphold their commitments. We agree with what Ukraine Foreign Minister Leonid Kozhara recently said on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, that “[t]he universal lessons from these terrible events must not be forgotten.


We must redouble our efforts to prevent and counter intolerance, hate and discrimination in all its forms, and promote respect for all ethnic and religious groups.” These pending laws contradict Ukraine’s stated goals for its chairmanship of strengthening implementation of OSCE commitments, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, and protecting freedom of expression.

We respectfully call on our colleagues in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to respect its Constitution and international rights commitments by rejecting these bills.


Sincerely,


  
Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress


  
Joseph Crowley  
Member of Congress

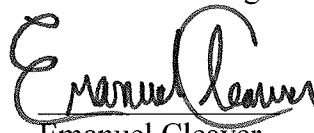
  
David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress


  
Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

  
Matthew A. Cartwright  
Member of Congress

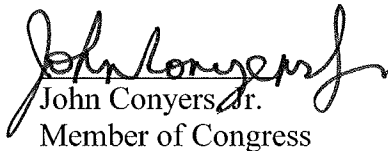
  
Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

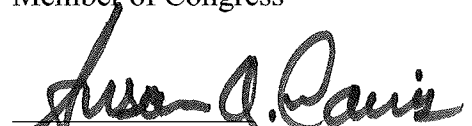
  
Judy Chu  
Member of Congress


  
Emanuel Cleaver  
Member of Congress

  
Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress


  
Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress


  
John Conyers Jr.  
Member of Congress

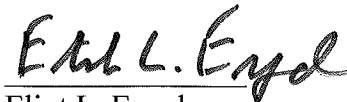
  
Susan A. Davis  
Member of Congress

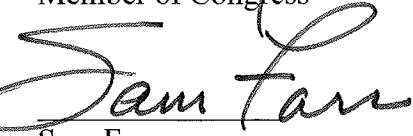
  
John K. Delaney  
Member of Congress


  
Theodore E. Deutch  
Member of Congress


  
Michael F. Doyle  
Member of Congress


  
Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress


  
Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress


  
Sam Farr  
Member of Congress

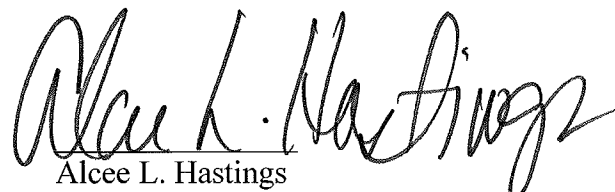
  
Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress


  
John Garamendi  
Member of Congress


  
Raul M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress


  
Luis V. Gutierrez  
Member of Congress

  
Richard L. Hanna  
Member of Congress


  
Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress


  
Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress


  
James A. Himes  
Member of Congress

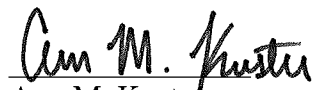
  
Michael M. Honda  
Member of Congress

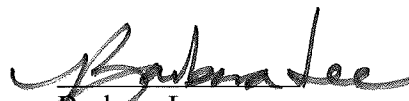
  
Steve Israel  
Member of Congress

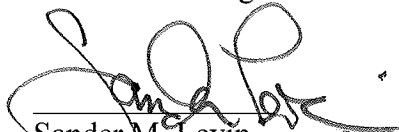
  
Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress

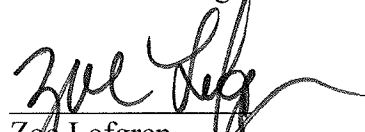
  
William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

  
Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
Member of Congress

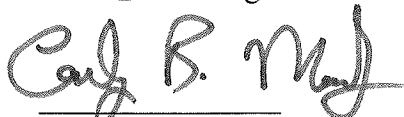
  
Ann M. Kuster  
Member of Congress


  
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

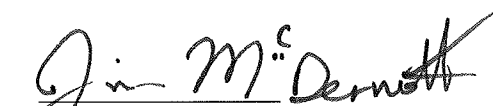
  
Sander M. Levin  
Member of Congress

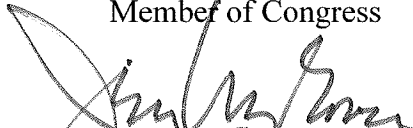
  
Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

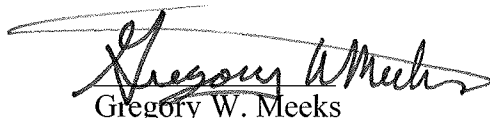
  
Alan S. Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

  
Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress


  
Edward J. Markey  
Member of Congress


  
Jim McDermott  
Member of Congress


  
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

  
Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress


  
Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

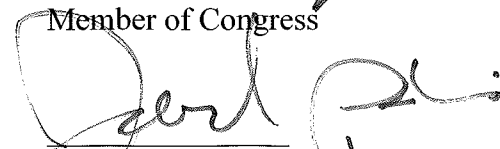
  
James P. Moran  
Member of Congress

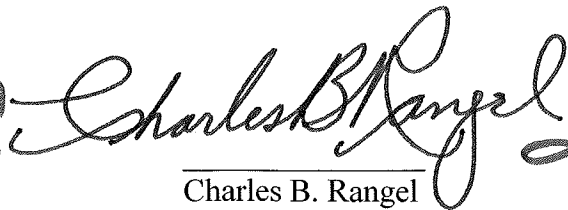
  
Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

  
Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress

  
Scott Peters  
Member of Congress

  
Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

  
Jared Polis  
Member of Congress

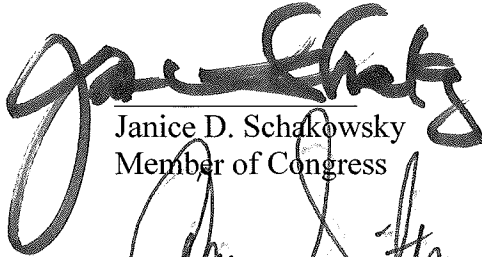


Charles B. Rangel  
Member of Congress

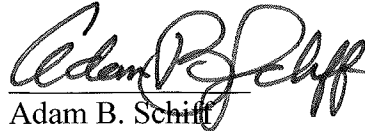


Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress



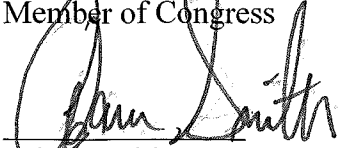
Janice D. Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress



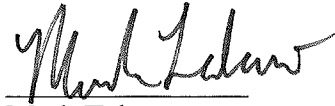
Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress



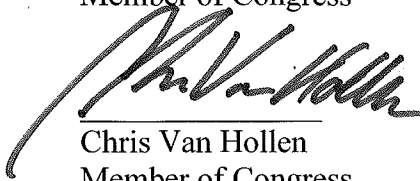
Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress



Mark Takano  
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen  
Member of Congress



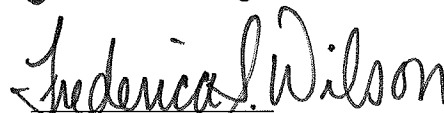
Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress



Henry A. Waxman  
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable John F. Tefft, American Ambassador, 4, I. Sikorsky Street, 04112 Kyiv, Ukraine

His Excellency Olexander Motsyk, Ambassador of Ukraine, 3350 M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20007

Heads of Committees of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine