

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 16, 2013

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write to you today about a country whose importance to U.S. foreign policy cannot be overstated—Pakistan.

As you know, Pakistan plans to hold general elections in May 2013. Ambassador Richard Olson has expressed the United States' hope that the elections will be free, fair and transparent. Unfortunately, Pakistan's electoral system discriminates on the basis of religion, rendering the promise of free and fair elections a sham.

In order to register, each citizen must fill out a form stating his or her religious affiliation. Not only are matters of conscience wholly irrelevant to the exercise of this fundamental right of citizenship, but for Pakistan's four million Ahmadi Muslims, this requirement blocks their right to vote. The only way the Ahmadis—members of a peaceful sect within Islam who have nonetheless been declared non-Muslim under Pakistan's Constitution—can cast a ballot is if they are willing to renounce their Islamic faith. Moreover, pursuant to Pakistani Presidential Order No. 15 of 2002 ("Executive Order No. 15"), Ahmadis are uniquely excluded from the joint electoral rolls, and required to be registered on a separate supplementary voter roll.

This pernicious regime of discrimination—which if unresolved, will certainly mar Pakistan's elections—is relatively easy to change. It is our understanding that a new presidential order can rescind Executive Order No. 15 and thereby foster at least the conditions for free and fair elections. Notably, even the Supreme Court of Pakistan has taken notice of the exclusion of Ahmadis from the joint electoral rolls, and has ordered both the Attorney General of Pakistan and the Election Commission of Pakistan to explain how such a system can be consistent with the equal right of all citizens, irrespective of religion, to vote.

If this—the first time in Pakistan's history that a democratically elected government peacefully passes power to another through elections—is truly to be a watershed moment, we cannot stand idly by and allow four million Ahmadis to remain disenfranchised and outside the electoral process.

Absent the ability for Pakistan's entire electorate to participate, we will not be able to endorse the May elections.

The preservation of Pakistan's very democracy—and, indirectly, our national security—is at stake, as are our own commitments to human rights and international religious freedoms—both central interests of the State Department.

You have a unique opportunity to advocate on behalf of an entire segment of Pakistani society which has long been marginalized and oppressed.

We urge you to press Pakistani President Zardari to immediately repeal Executive Order No. 15 and remove any discriminatory restrictions on Ahmadis being able to vote in the upcoming May elections.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters
Member of Congress



Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress



Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress



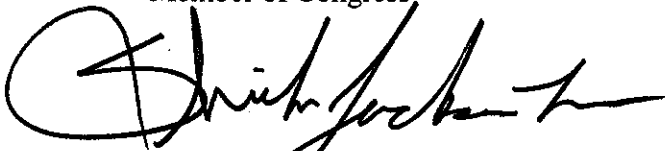
Richard L. Hanna
Member of Congress



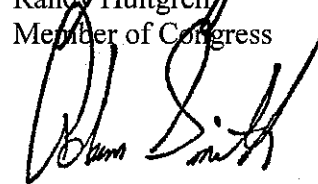
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



Randy Hultgren
Member of Congress



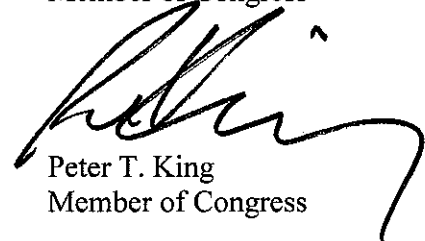
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



Peter T. King
Member of Congress



Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress



Charles W. Dent
Member of Congress



Ted Poe
Member of Congress



Steve Israel
Member of Congress



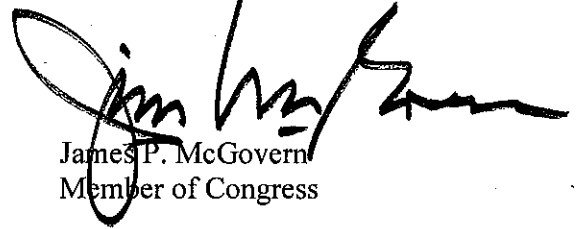
Peter J. Roskam
Member of Congress



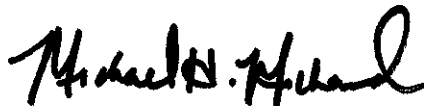
Thomas E. Petri
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Michael H. Michaud
Member of Congress



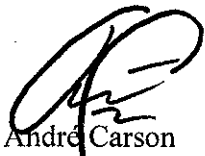
Dana Rohrabacher
Member of Congress



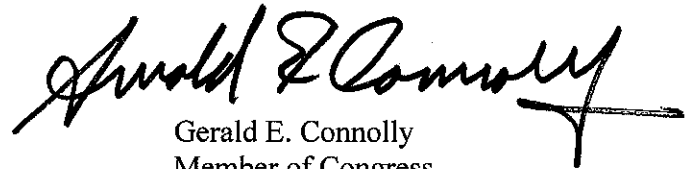
Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



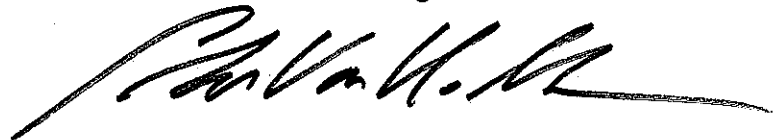
Andre Carson
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



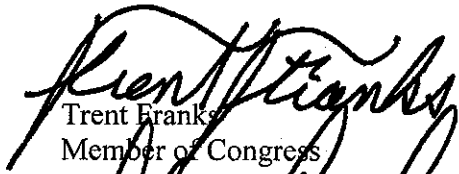
Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress



Timothy H. Bishop
Member of Congress



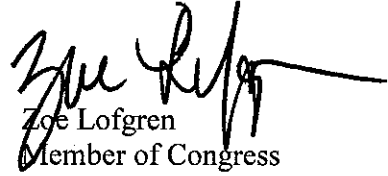
Joseph R. Pitts
Member of Congress



Trent Franks
Member of Congress



Illeana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress