

# Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

March 30, 2011

Presidente Constitucional de la Republica de Guatemala  
Ingeniero Álvaro Colom Caballeros  
Casa Presidencial  
6ª. Avenida "A" 4-18, Zona 1  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Dear Mr. President:

We are extremely concerned about the human rights impact of the establishment of large-scale industrial gold-mining operations in Guatemala. In particular, we have serious concerns about the Marlin gold mine in San Miguel Ixtahuacán, operated by the Canadian company Goldcorp. We urge you to immediately suspend operations at the Marlin mine and address the ongoing human rights, health, and environmental concerns of the indigenous communities.

As you are aware, eighteen Mayan communities indigenous to the western highlands region have filed petitions citing serious human rights, health, and environmental concerns relating to the Marlin mine. Local indigenous communities allege that it has contaminated local water sources used for consumption and irrigation, and that toxic pollutants from the mine have caused serious health problems among community members.

In May 2010, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) issued a precautionary measure, calling on your government to suspend operations at the mine until the human rights concerns of those communities had been addressed. It is our understanding that, despite the Guatemalan government's June 2010 announcement that operations at the Marlin mine would be suspended, this cessation was never implemented.

In addition to the IACHR ruling, the International Labor Organization (ILO) also expressed concern about the mine. Independent studies by the University of Michigan and E-Tech international have likewise cited serious concerns relating to the public health and environmental impacts of the project.

Further, this mine has been the focal point of violence and conflict since construction began in 2004. In 2005, one person was killed and a dozen were injured in protests against the project. In July 2010, mining opponent Deodora Hernandez was shot in the head by unknown assailants. Large scale natural resource extraction projects, like the Marlin mine, have the potential to foster community conflicts and regional destabilization.

We strongly urge you to fully implement the May 2010 IACHR ruling and your government's subsequent decision to halt operations at the Marlin mine. As supporters of fundamental human and worker rights, we ask you to ensure that the human rights, health, and environmental concerns expressed by the 18 indigenous communities are fully addressed. Finally, we hope you will work with other governments, corporations, and civil society throughout the region to end

unsustainable and irresponsible natural resource extraction and to promote economic activities that will more effectively reduce poverty and promote economic development.

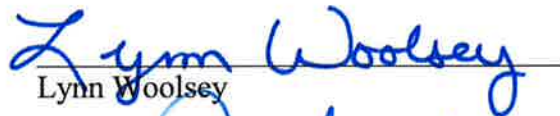
Thank you for your attention and consideration.

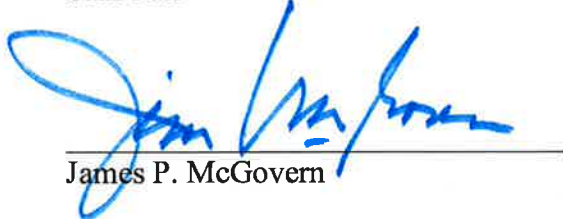
Sincerely,

  
Jan Schakowsky

  
James P. Moran

  
Sam Farr

  
Lynn Woolsey

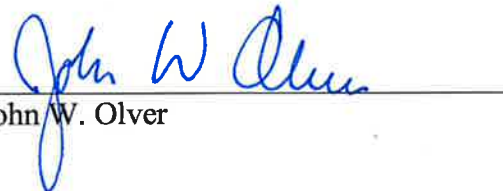
  
James P. McGovern

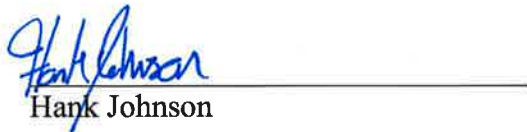
  
Pete Stark

  
Donald Payne

  
Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.

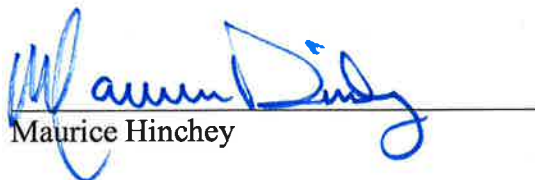
  
Barney Frank

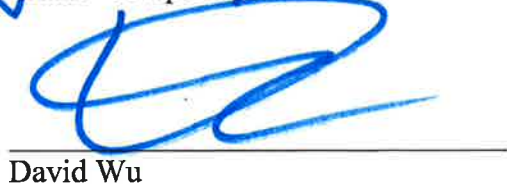
  
John W. Olver

  
Hank Johnson

  
Michael Michaud

  
Grace F. Napolitano

  
Maurice Hinchey

  
David Wu

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