

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 9, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write today to encourage the swift appointment of a Special Representative to Africa's Great Lakes region. We share your long-standing interest in and concern for this troubled part of the world, and given its numerous and complex challenges, we believe the appointment of a high level representative who answers directly to the Secretary of State will help ensure that U.S. policy is coordinated, comprehensive and effective.

The violence that continues to plague the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), including extrajudicial killings and the systemic and pervasive use of rape and sexual violence, has destroyed the lives of countless civilians. It is perpetuated by the ongoing struggle between armed groups for control of the DRC's natural resources, particularly minerals. With the DRC scheduled to hold its third elections on November 27, 2011, we fear that without sufficient international attention the already dangerous and volatile environment could significantly worsen.

The atrocities being perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) also require high level, sustained attention. LRA attacks continue in the region, as rebels terrorize and attack civilians and abduct children from their homes and schools. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced as a result of this violence.

Each day, our Ambassadors in the countries of the Great Lakes region confront a multitude of challenges, and we appreciate their service. However, a Special Representative, empowered to travel frequently to engage the myriad actors in the region, would not be duplicative of these efforts. A Special Representative would build upon the work of the Ambassadors in a coordinating role, imparting focus on U.S. efforts in the DRC and the broader Great Lakes region. The appointment would also make an important statement that these issues are a high priority for your Administration.

In December 2006, the *Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act*, which you authored, was signed into law. That legislation called for the appointment of a "Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region" to help coordinate U.S. efforts in the region. We believe the rationale for that legislation is no less compelling today, and were therefore disappointed by Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Donald Yamamoto's recent testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee that the Administration was simply taking the appointment of a Special Representative "under

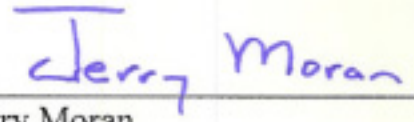
advisement." We share the view of a wide range of human rights and humanitarian organizations that this position should be filled without delay.

Thank you for your consideration.

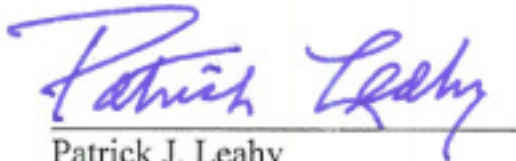
Sincerely,



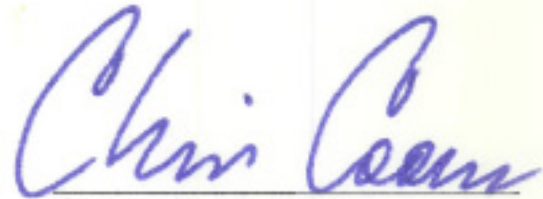
Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator



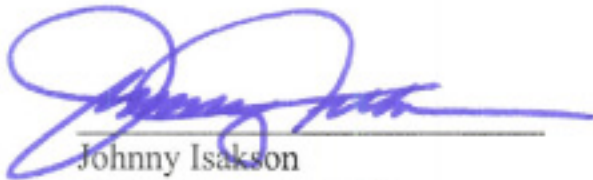
Jerry Moran  
United States Senator



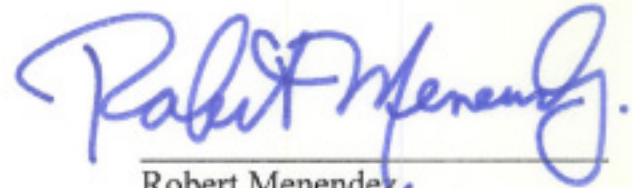
Patrick J. Leahy  
United States Senator



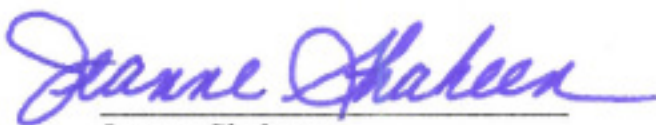
Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



Johnny Isakson  
United States Senator



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



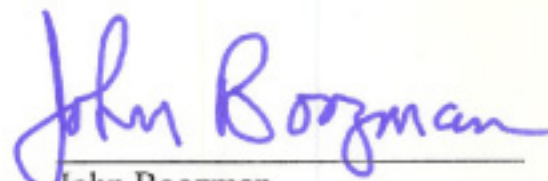
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



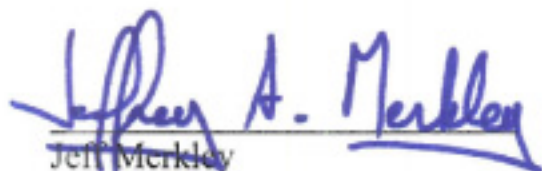
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



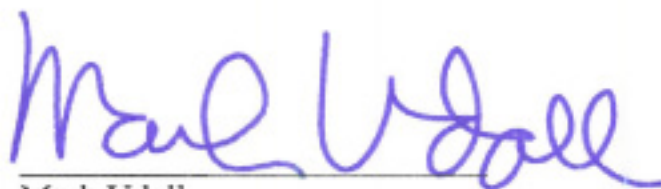
John Boozman  
United States Senator



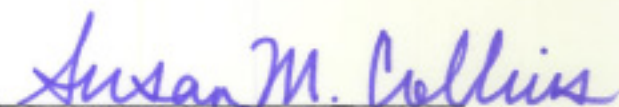
Tom Udall  
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator



Mark Udall  
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator