

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

February 22, 2019

Mr. Richard Anderson  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Amtrak  
1 Massachusetts Ave NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Anderson:

We write to raise concerns shared with us by various stakeholders regarding changes that Amtrak has recently implemented and is reportedly considering making to its operations. We are concerned that such changes will diminish the valuable service Amtrak offers the public, and we request that Amtrak provide us with additional information on these actions.

As you know, Amtrak plays an important role in our national transportation system. Every year, millions of passengers rely on Amtrak to reach their destinations. This includes the 12.1 million people who traveled the Northeast Corridor (NEC) and the nearly 20 million passengers served by Amtrak's state-supported and long-distance routes in Fiscal Year 2018. While Amtrak plays a significant role in the NEC, the railroad's national network is crucial to maintaining a truly national passenger railroad system. Amtrak's web of state-supported routes and 15 long-distance routes provide service to 40 percent of the country's rural and small communities, creating a vital link between urban and rural centers. Through its customers and direct employment of more than 20,000 workers, Amtrak helps contribute tens of billions of dollars to our national economy.<sup>1</sup>

Given the benefits Amtrak provides to its passengers, our communities, and our economy, it is crucial that we maintain a viable intercity passenger rail network. Doing so requires that Amtrak provide the quality service its passengers want and expect. This is why we are concerned by recent changes Amtrak has reportedly implemented, such as eliminating station agents at stations that average fewer than 40 passengers a day. This change eliminates more than 20 agents at 15 stations throughout the country, limiting passengers' access to on-site travel support at those facilities. Reportedly, some of those agents were replaced with contract employees responsible for caring for the station's facilities but not providing comparable passenger support. Amtrak also recently closed its reservation call center in Riverside, California, where nearly 500 personnel remotely assisted passengers in securing and adjusting Amtrak travel. Shutting this facility reduced the number of personnel familiar with Amtrak's routes, schedules, and amenities who are available to capably support passengers in need of assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> Amtrak General and Legislative Annual Report & Fiscal Year 2019 Grant Request, February 15, 2018, Page 18.

We have also heard from numerous stakeholders who are concerned about the future of onboard food and beverage services, a feature of intercity passenger rail travel that bolsters ridership by drawing travelers to Amtrak. In June 2018, dining car service was eliminated on Lake Shore Limited and Capitol Limited long-distance routes. Passengers traveling these routes no longer have access to meals freshly prepared onboard, including sleeper car passengers whose premium ticket fare includes the cost of meals. Instead, sleeper car passengers receive reheated pre-cooked meals and other passengers only have access to quick-service foods, such as sandwiches and snacks. As a result of this change, career Amtrak employees who provided dining car service lost their jobs with little warning.

We also understand that Amtrak has issued a Request for Information (RFI)<sup>2</sup> soliciting information on “transformational service models and industry best practices” relating to food and beverage services – information that Amtrak may use to develop a Request for Proposal. As the RFI explains, past attempts by Amtrak to reduce the quality of this service were reversed after the ridership objected to the changes. Stakeholders worry this RFI may lead to attempts by Amtrak to contract-out food and beverage service— reducing the quality passengers expect at the expense of Amtrak employees.

In addition, we understand Amtrak has reduced benefits enjoyed by its ridership community, including ending discounts for veterans, AAA members, and students while raising the qualifying age and reducing the discount for seniors. Amtrak has also nearly eliminated all charter services or special trains and has significantly scaled back opportunities for private cars to travel on Amtrak trains, instituting switching location restrictions and increasing fees.

We are concerned that the changes Amtrak has made and those it may be considering will erode ridership and harm the viability of Amtrak, especially the National Network. Maintaining an intercity passenger rail system that is truly national in scope is crucial to providing transportation access to many rural and small communities. Moreover, it is required by law. When Congress created Amtrak, we specifically called for a national system in which Amtrak would operate a national rail passenger transportation system that includes not only the NEC, but also state supported and long-distance routes.<sup>3</sup>

As a quasi-public corporation entrusted with this statutory responsibility, Amtrak must uphold the law. Amtrak cannot seek to circumvent obligations by enacting a series of unilateral changes that harm ridership until the provision of a national passenger railroad becomes untenable. Rather, any changes to the National Network or Amtrak’s duty of providing a national service must be sanctioned by Congress alone. Lastly, as a railroad subject to federal law and labor standards<sup>4</sup>, it is incumbent upon Amtrak to provide quality jobs with the appropriate benefits. It must not seek to reduce costs by replacing its employees with a contracted workforce.

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<sup>2</sup> Request For Information, Managed Onboard Food and Beverage Service, Issued August 31, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> 49 USC Section 24701

<sup>4</sup> Railway Labor Act, Railroad Retirement Act, Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act.

To address these concerns, we request that Amtrak reply to each of the following questions no later than March 8, 2019.

- Does Amtrak remain committed to meeting its statutory responsibility of providing a national intercity passenger rail network that includes state-supported and long-distance routes in addition to the NEC? Will Amtrak continue to maintain current state-support and long-distance routes, until directed otherwise by Congress?
- Is Amtrak considering further reductions in the assistance it provides passengers at stations throughout the system? If so, what services are under consideration and which stations may be impacted?
- Is Amtrak considering additional changes to its reservation call center service?
- What led Amtrak to eliminate dining car service on the Lake Shore Limited and Capitol Limited routes? Is Amtrak considering eliminating dining car service or otherwise altering food and beverage services currently offered on other long-distance routes?
- Regarding the RFI referenced above, how will Amtrak measure whether the service models or best practices submitted will improve Amtrak's financial performance and customer experience – the goals stated in the RFI? Will Amtrak consult with Congress and stakeholders during its examination and consideration of submissions and prior to issuing any potential food and beverage Request for Proposals?
- The RFI asks each responding entity to indicate whether it would “be deemed a ‘Rail Carrier’” under federal regulations – a designation that obligates significant worker benefits. The RFI also requests entities to consider staffing “with and without Amtrak employees now performing” food and beverage services and poses a series of staffing-related questions. Is Amtrak considering contracting-out this work? How will replies relating to the “rail carrier” designation impact Amtrak's assessment of the response? How does Amtrak perceive its responsibility to comply with the protections included in 49 USC 24321 (Section 11207, PL 114-94), which protect workers from involuntary separation as a result of a plan to eliminate onboard food and beverage service operating losses?
- Is Amtrak considering further changes that would limit the ability of private car owners to travel on Amtrak trains? If so, please provide the basis for such changes, as a recent Inspector General report critiqued Amtrak's management of the private car service, including a lack of information on the costs of the service (OIG-A-2019-003).
- Is Amtrak considering or planning to make changes to its maintenance facilities, including closing or consolidating them or contracting-out the work currently performed at them? If so, please describe such changes.

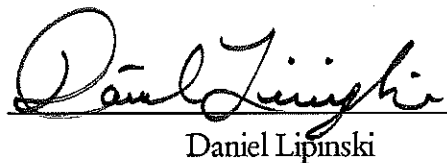
We look forward to receiving your response. If you have questions or need further information, please contact the majority staff of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials at (202) 225-3274.

Sincerely,



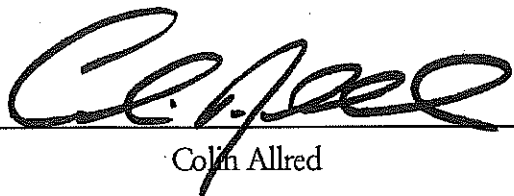
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Peter A. DeFazio



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Daniel Lipinski



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Colin Allred



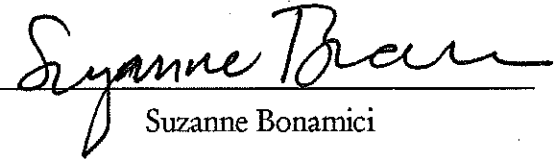
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Karen Bass



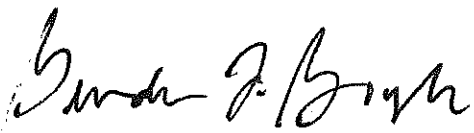
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Earl Blumenauer



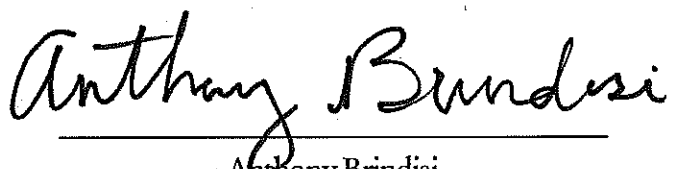
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Suzanne Bonamici




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Brendan F. Boyle



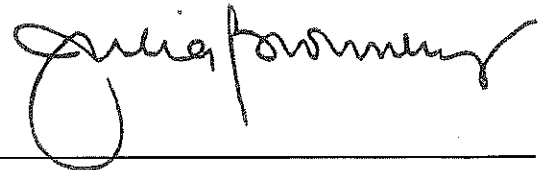
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Anthony Brindisi



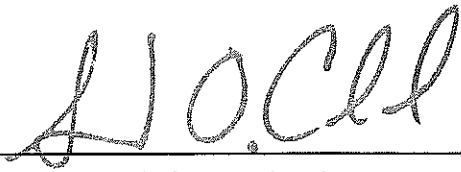
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Anthony G. Brown

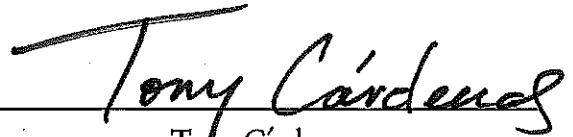


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Julia Brownley



Salud O. Carbajal



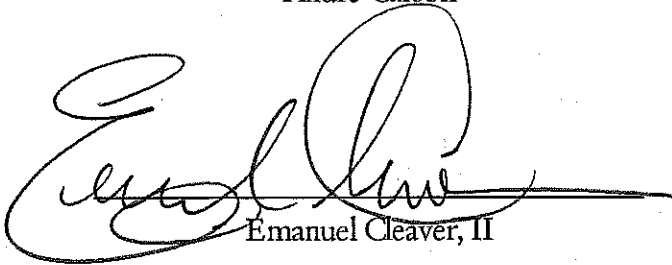
Tony Cárdenas



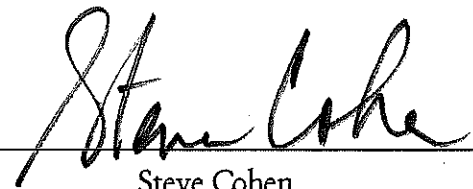
André Carson



Katherine M. Clark



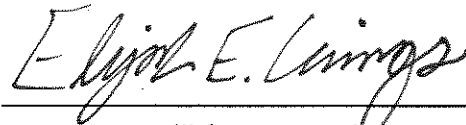
Emanuel Cleaver, II



Steve Cohen



Angie Craig



Elijah E. Cummings



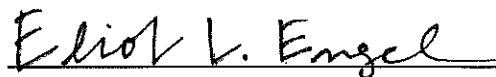
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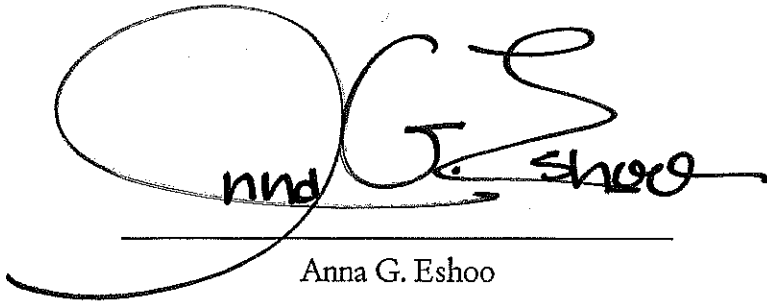
Mark DeSaulnier



Michael F. Doyle



Eliot L. Engel



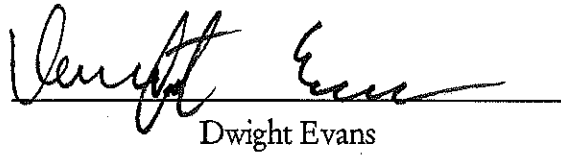
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Anna G. Eshoo



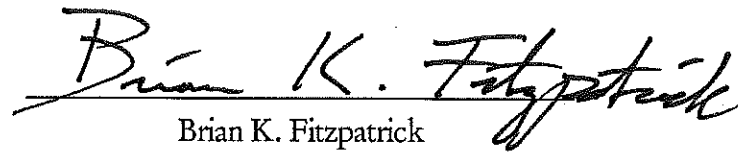
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Adriano Espaillat



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Dwight Evans



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Brian K. Fitzpatrick



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Lizzie Fletcher



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Bill Foster



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John Garamendi



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Jesús G. "Chuy" García




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Al Green



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Raúl M. Grijalva



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Debra A. Haaland



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Brian Higgins

*Katie Hill*

Katie Hill

*Chrissy Houlahan*

Chrissy Houlahan

*Jared Huffman*

Jared Huffman

*Sheila Jackson Lee*

Sheila Jackson Lee

*Hank Johnson*

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.

*Ron Kind*

Ron Kind

*Ann M. Kuster*

Ann M. Kuster

*Conor Lamb*

Conor Lamb

*Rick Larsen*

Rick Larsen

*Andy Levin*

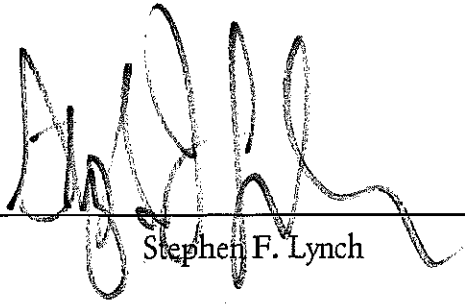
Andy Levin

*Dave Loebsack*

Dave Loebsack

*Alan S. Lowenthal*

Alan S. Lowenthal



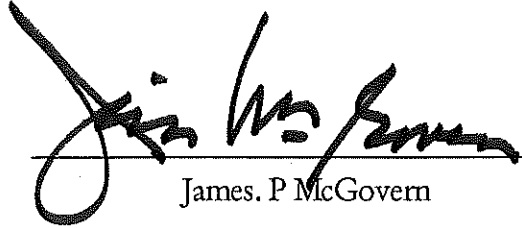
Stephen F. Lynch



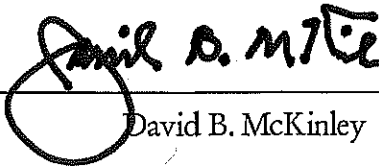
Tom Malinowski



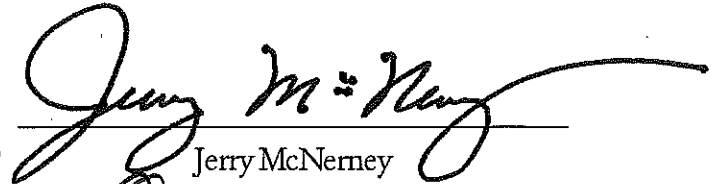
Betty McCollum



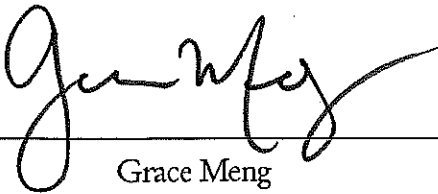
James P. McGovern



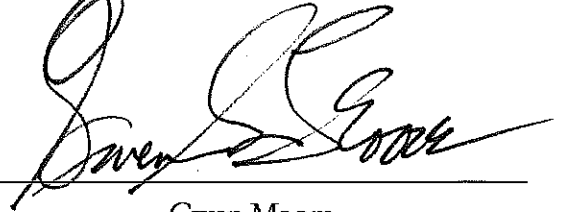
David B. McKinley



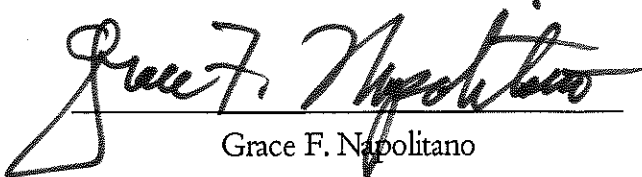
Jerry McNerney



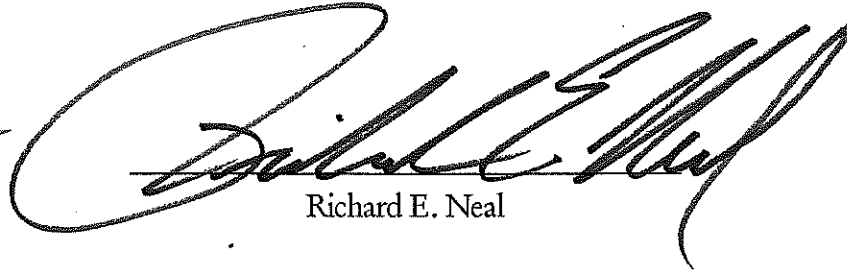
Grace Meng



Gwen Moore




Grace F. Napolitano



Richard E. Neal



Donald Norcross

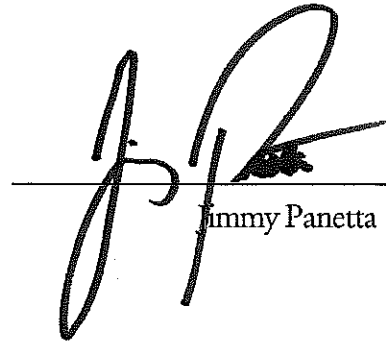


Eleanor Holmes Norton





Frank Pallone, Jr.



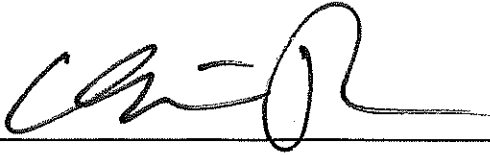
Jimmy Panetta



Chris Pappas



Bill Pascrell, Jr.



Chellie Pingree



Mark Pocan



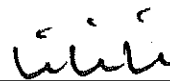
Mike Quigley



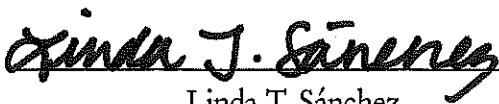
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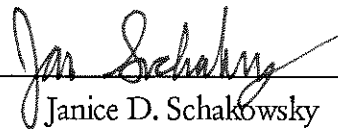
Harley Rouda



Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan



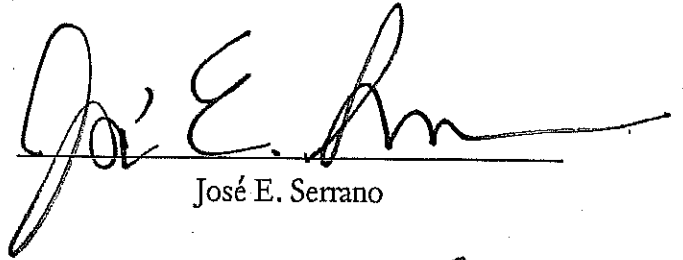
Linda T. Sanchez



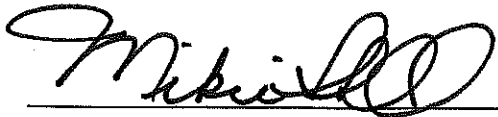
Janice D. Schakowsky



Sean Patrick Maloney



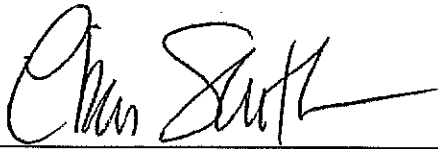
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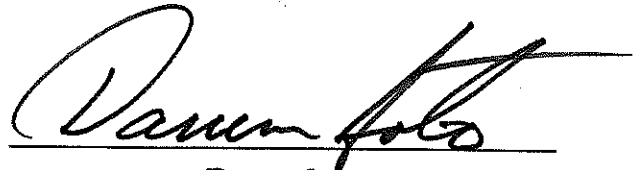
Mikie Sherrill



Albio Sires



Christopher H. Smith



Darren Soto



Jackie Speier



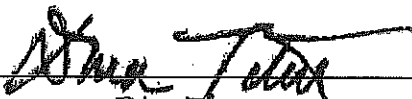
Greg Stanton



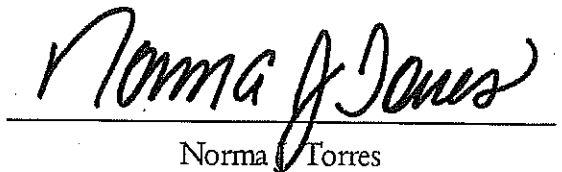
Eric Swalwell



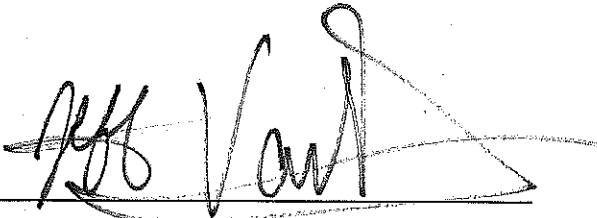
Mark Takano



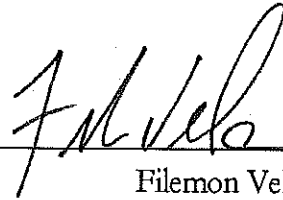
Dina Titus



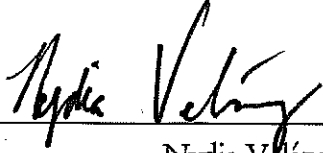
Norma Torres



Jefferson Van Drew



Filemon Vela



Nydia Velázquez



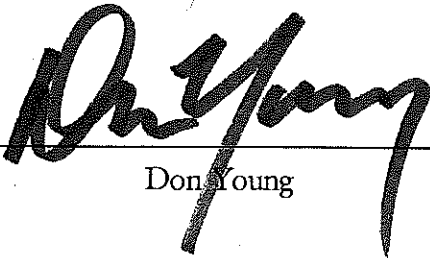
Peter Welch



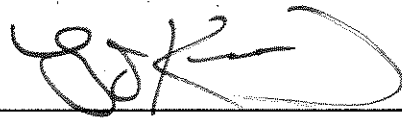
Susan Wild



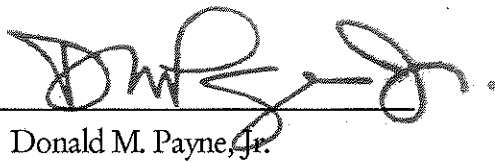
Frederica S. Wilson



Don Young



Joseph P. Kennedy, III



Donald M. Payne, Jr.