Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 26, 2009

The President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are writing to express our deep concern about recent developments and current U.S. policy within the International Whaling Commission (IWC). While this may seem on the surface to be a minor issue, it represents an urgent danger to our international prestige and our ability to protect whales.

On February 2, 2009, the IWC released a small working group report on "the Future of the IWC." The report, signed by the head of the U.S. delegation and Chair of the IWC, Dr. William Hogarth, represents a continued erosion of United States leadership in protecting marine mammals.

During his two terms in office, President George W. Bush and his administration began to reverse the United States policies on whaling. Many of these polices dated back to President Nixon and had been sustained by six successive administrations. Dr. Hogarth has received no new instructions from your administration, and is continuing to promote the harmful policies of the Bush administration. The package that Dr. Hogarth is touting would lift in part the ban on commercial whaling, likely lead to more whales killed each year, and expose populations already in danger of extinction to increased slaughter.

We request that you carefully consider the recommendations contained in the letter sent to you by the Whales Need US Coalition on January 26, 2009. Included in this letter were requests that you and your administration:

- Immediately review and provide new instructions to the U.S. Commissioner and the United States delegation to the IWC;
- Ensure that your administration returns to the time-honored practice of designating the Director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as the United States IWC Commissioner;
- Explicitly rule out U.S. support for any initiative or policy in which the IWC or its scientific committee agrees to approve Special Permit catches or any version of "Coastal Whaling" or legitimize any other or new form of whaling not currently allowed under the existing IWC framework or through any modification of that framework, thereby legitimizing such catches and undermining the existing moratorium;
- Reaffirm the United States' commitment to uphold and strengthen the commercial whaling moratorium and delineate specific steps to accomplish this objective;

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society, closing loopholes in the whaling convention currently being exploited by whaling nations, and adding meaningful enforcement mechanisms to the treaty;

- Use U.S. diplomatic, political, legal and economic influence to curb the escalation of whaling by Japan and the continued whaling by Norway and Iceland and to seek an urgent cessation of these activities;
- Work constructively with other IWC member countries to support and encourage them to pursue non-lethal marine mammal research and economic activities -- such as responsible whale watching -- which offer greater benefits for coastal communities in the United States and worldwide.

We believe that America has a vested interest in leading the international effort to end all forms of commercial whaling including so called "scientific whaling." While we appreciate that the package allows for the discussion of ending scientific whaling over a five year period, the inclusion of immediate coastal whaling demonstrates that this is mere tokenism to organizations and nations that have serious concerns regarding present policies.

We urge you to issue new directions to the U.S. delegation before the intersessional meeting in March and replace Dr. Hogarth with the NOAA Administrator before the June meeting.

Sincerely,

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Nick J. Rahall, II
Member of Congress

Charles A. Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Ted Poe
Member of Congress

John Lewis
Member of Congress

Henry Waxman
Member of Congress

George Miller
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress

Barney Frank
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
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Mazie K. Hirono
Member of Congress

Lois Capps
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Jerry McNerney
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Lynn C. Woolsey
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Pete Stark
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Earl Blumenauer
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Dennis Moore
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Brian Higgins
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Michael M. Honda
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Shelley Berkley
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William Lacy Clay
Member of Congress