

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 3, 2012

The Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave. SW
Washington DC 20585

Dear Secretary Chu,

As Members of Congress we share your support for innovative and ground-breaking scientific research and your enthusiasm for the scientific advances that are being made at the National Ignition Facility (NIF) at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Achieving fusion ignition at NIF is a critical goal for both exploring the potential for future fusion energy sources and stewardship of our nuclear weapons stockpile. Fusion has the long-term potential to result in game-changing breakthroughs leading to more fundamental understanding of physics for both stockpile stewardship and fusion energy. In order to achieve these breakthroughs, however, we must have a robust and well-managed fusion ignition research program. We urge you to do all you can to ensure this research continues unhindered.

As you are undoubtedly aware, NIF recently achieved a major milestone: the world's first successful firing of a 500 *terawatt* laser. While technical challenges remain to be solved before ignition is achieved, this milestone demonstrates major progress and provides even greater capability to address the remaining challenges. Recent technical reviews by independent experts indicate that there are no fundamental technical reasons that would preclude eventually achieving ignition.

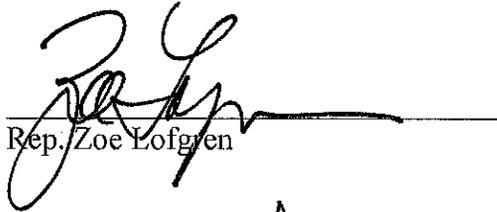
Given the tremendous progress to date, we are concerned that—rather than technical and scientific challenges—administrative, managerial and budgetary hurdles threaten to impede this promising research. Based upon the many reports that have documented significant governance and management problems at the Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), we are concerned that scientific advances at NIF and around the DOE/NNSA complex are being stifled by micromanagement and burdensome administrative processes. We strongly encourage you to personally engage on these well-documented, long-standing problems, and work with Congress to restore the proper relationship between the DOE, the NNSA, and the federally funded research and development centers (FFRDCs) so that science can truly flourish at the national nuclear security labs.

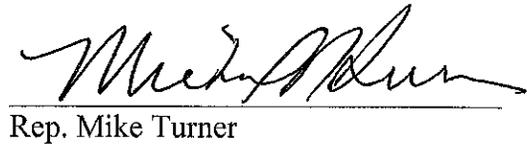
It would be severely disappointing to get so close to a tremendous scientific breakthrough—fusion ignition at NIF—only to see it prevented by bureaucracy. We must not let science be stifled by bureaucracy. We encourage you to visit the NIF and see firsthand the rigor, excitement and achievements generated by the many scientists collaboratively working there. We

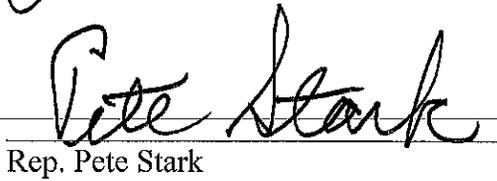
also encourage you to discuss with the scientists at NIF and around the NNSA complex the burdensome bureaucracy that often stands in their way.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

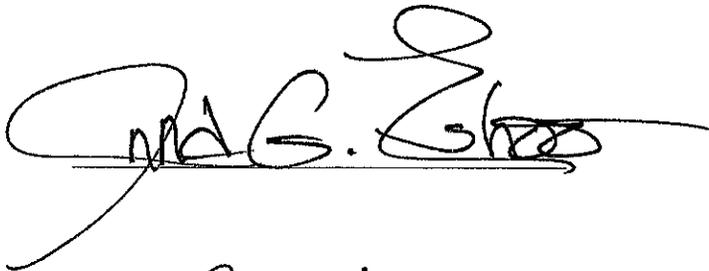
Sincerely,


Rep. Zoe Lofgren

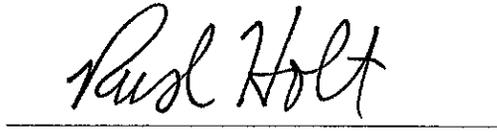

Rep. Mike Turner


Rep. Pete Stark

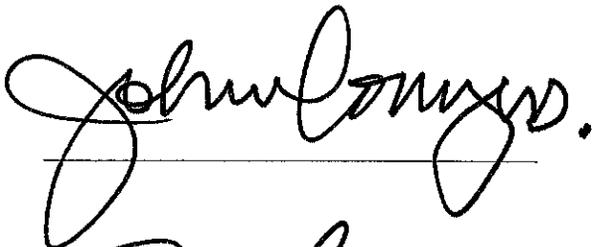






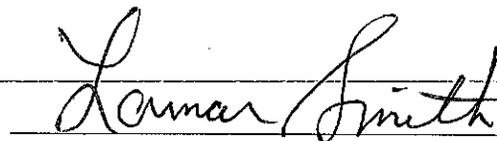












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Judy Chu

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Lynn A. Walsey for Mrs

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John Smith ch-2

~~Julie Speer~~

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Alfred Haltinger

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