

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

As Members of the Congressional Caucus on U.S.-Turkish Relations and as strong supporters of our important bilateral relationship, we are writing to you to express our unequivocal support for your upcoming trip to Turkey, which we believe is an historic opportunity to enhance one of our nation's most important strategic partnerships. It is also a chance to renew the ties that for over sixty years have bound America and Turkey together in friendship, mutual respect and common purpose.

President Obama, during your speech to a joint meeting of Congress in February you stated, "We are showing the world that a new era of engagement has begun. For we know that America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, but the world cannot meet them without America." To that end, your trip to Turkey comes at a critical juncture as the United States, and the international community, face a deepening global financial crisis and are grappling with serious security challenges in Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, the Balkans, the Black Sea Region, and the Middle East.

We believe Turkey—the world's 17th largest economy, a stalwart geo-strategic NATO ally, a member of the G20, and a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council—is perfectly suited to "meet the threats of this century," including the threat of nuclear proliferation, countering terrorism, energy security, and playing a partnering role with the U.S. and our allies in bringing greater stability, democracy and security to several areas of national security that are concerns to America, the transatlantic alliance and international community.

We are hopeful that your discussions with President Gul, Prime Minister Erdogan and his government will focus on increasing U.S.-Turkish cooperation and coordination in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Since 2002, Turkey has played a leading role in providing humanitarian, economic, military, and security assistance in Afghanistan and has led the International Security Assistance Forces in Kabul on two occasions. In April, Turkey will host for the third time a trilateral Summit with the participation of the Presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is our hope that as your Administration unveils its strategic review of Afghanistan, NATO allies including the Turkish government, which has signaled its support for a new Afghan strategy, will be prepared to commit additional resources specifically expanding and improving the Afghan security forces and the national police force.

As you know, Turkey has also played a positive and cooperative role in efforts to secure and stabilize Iraq through its strong role in the Trilateral Iraq-Turkey-U.S. Commission. Turkey's airbase at Incirlik and Harbur Gate, along its border with Northern Iraq, have been critical to American military operations and logistics in Iraq. During Secretary Clinton's meeting with Foreign Minister Babacan, she thanked the Turkish government for its "key role in helping build the Iraqi economy, particularly in Northern Iraq . . . and have been very helpful in working with the people of Iraq as they struggle to form their own democracy."

As your Administration finalizes its withdrawal plans for Iraq, it is important to reiterate, as was done in the Joint U.S.-Turkey Statement on March 7, American and Turkish "commitment to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq as well as . . . support for a democratic, pluralistic, unified and federal Iraq." We believe Turkey will continue to be a leading partner in Iraq's future political, economic and security success and can—if agreed to by all parties—play a central role in your plans to withdraw American troops safely, effectively and securely from Iraq.

During your visit, we urge you to use this opportunity to reiterate—as Secretary of State Clinton did in Ankara—your support for Turkey's membership in the European Union (EU). The United States must remain an iron clad supporter of Turkish membership in the EU. To that end, we believe that your Administration should continue to encourage and provide assistance to Prime Minister Erdogan's government to make certain that the necessary political, economic and judicial reforms are implemented as part of the criteria for membership in the European Union. We believe Turkey's success as a secular democracy that fully respects the rule of law and guarantees freedoms, civil, religious and human rights are in the interest of the Turkish people, the European Union and the United States.

There are few issues that weigh more heavily on the minds of the Turkish people than the unconscionable death and destruction caused over the past several decades by PKK terrorists. We believe that the US must stand with our Turkish allies as they combat the PKK domestically and in Northern Iraq and we urge you and your Administration to maintain America's commitment to assist Ankara in their counterterrorism efforts. As we ask Turkey, which has been victimized by the PKK, Al Qaeda, and other terrorist groups to work closely with the United States in countering extremism, it is imperative that we provide "actionable intelligence" and all available assistance to Ankara to permanently dismantle the PKK's terrorist infrastructure.

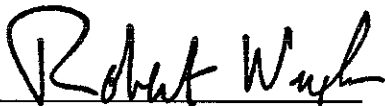
Mr. President, in addition to these issues, we are hopeful that your Administration lends its unequivocal support to Turkey and its rapprochement efforts with its neighbor Armenia. As members of Congress who care about the future of Turkey and Armenia and seek peace, security and prosperity in the Caucasus region, it is critical for us to encourage the normalization and ultimately the establishment of diplomatic, political and economic relations between these two nations. Turkey and Armenia should be applauded and encouraged to continue a process that is unprecedented in scope and nature. We believe during this process,

they deserve the highest level of support in the United States and the international community.

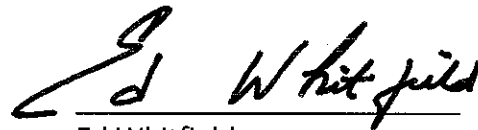
Your visit to Turkey opens the door to new possibilities and an opportunity to transform U.S.-Turkish relations and strengthen connections between Americans and Turks. As you prepare for your trip, we want to express our support for establishing stronger people to people links at the educational, cultural and social levels between our nations. We were pleased that Secretary Clinton announced the establishment of the Young Turkey-Young America initiative and we stand ready to assist the State Department as it implements this program.

Mr. President, we greatly appreciate your willingness to take into account our thoughts and suggestions as you prepare for your trip to Turkey. We know you will be warmly received by the Turkish government and people who cherish, as we do, the opportunity to create a new chapter in US-Turkish relations based on shared values and a common agenda befitting democratic allies and long-standing friends. Please know the Congressional Caucus on U.S.-Turkish Relations is prepared to work with you and your Administration to achieve this important goal.

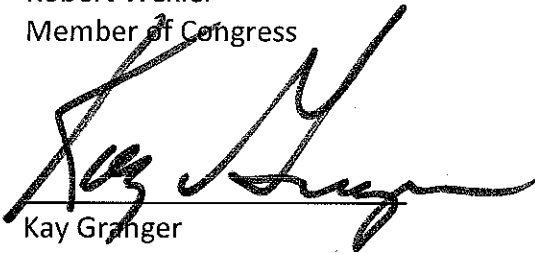
Sincerely,



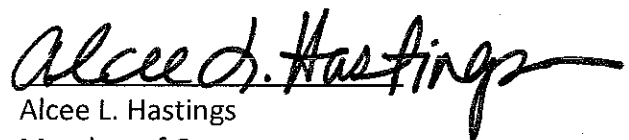
Robert Wexler
Member of Congress



Ed Whitfield
Member of Congress



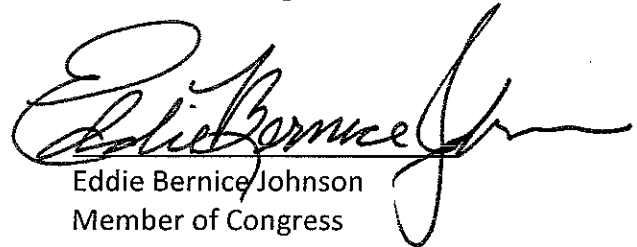
Kay Granger
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Dan Burton
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



Bill Shuster
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Jean Schmidt

Jean Schmidt
Member of Congress

Joe Barton

Joe Barton
Member of Congress

André Carson

André Carson
Member of Congress

Glenn Thompson

Glenn Thompson
Member of Congress

Solomon P. Ortiz

Solomon P. Ortiz
Member of Congress

Virginia Foxx

Virginia Foxx
Member of Congress

Joe Wilson

Joe Wilson
Member of Congress

Brad Miller

Brad Miller
Member of Congress

Ike Skelton

Ike Skelton
Member of Congress

David Scott

David Scott
Member of Congress

Norm Dicks

Norman D. Dicks
Member of Congress

Robert J. Wittman

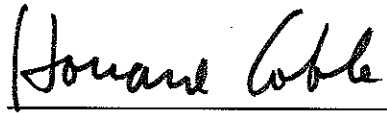
Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress

John S. Tanner

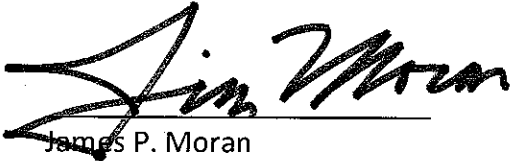
John S. Tanner
Member of Congress



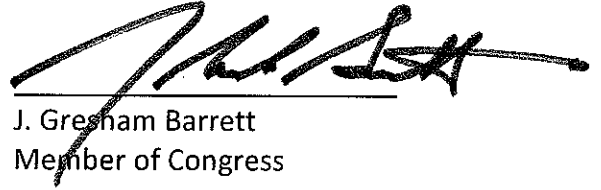
Michael E. McMahon
Member of Congress



Howard Coble
Member of Congress



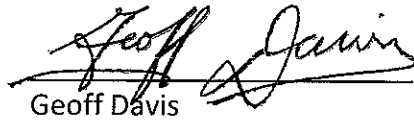
James P. Moran
Member of Congress



J. Gresham Barrett
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



Geoff Davis
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Carolyn C. Kilpatrick
Member of Congress