The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500  

Dear Mr. President,

We write to add our voices to our bipartisan Senate colleagues and convey our strong support for the Administration’s decision to conduct a comprehensive review of United States policy on landmines. The Second Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, held recently in Cartagena, Colombia, makes this review particularly timely. It is also consistent with your commitment to reaffirm U.S. leadership in solving global problems and with your remarks in Oslo when you accepted the Nobel peace Prize: “I am convinced that adhering to standards, international standards, strengthens those who do, and isolates and weakens those who don’t.”

These indiscriminate weapons are triggered by the victim, and even those that are designed to self-destruct after a period of time (so-called “smart” mines), pose a risk of being triggered by U.S. forces or civilians, such as a farmer working in the fields or a young child. It is our understanding that the United States has not exported anti-personnel mines since 1992, has not produced anti-personnel mines since 1997, and has not used anti-personnel mines since 1991. We are also proud that the United States is the world’s largest contributor to humanitarian demining and rehabilitation programs for landmine survivors.

In the ten years since the Convention came into force, 158 nations have signed, including the United Kingdom and other ISAF partners, as well as Iraq and Afghanistan which, like Colombia, are parties to the Convention and have suffered thousands of mine casualties. The Convention has led to a dramatic decline in the use, production, and export of anti-personnel mines.

We note that our NATO allies have addressed their force protection needs in accordance with their obligations under the Convention. We are also mindful that anti-personnel mines pose grave dangers to civilians, and that avoiding civilian casualties and the anger and resentment that result has become a key priority in building public support for our mission in Afghanistan. Finally, we are aware that anti-personnel mines in the Korean DMZ are South Korean mines, and that the U.S. has alternative munitions that are not victim-activated.

We believe the Administration’s review should include consultations with the Departments of Defense and State as well as retired senior U.S. military officers and diplomats, allies such as Canada and the United Kingdom that played a key role in the negotiations on the Convention, Members of Congress, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and other experts on landmines, humanitarian law and arms control. We are confident that through a
thorough, deliberative process the Administration can identify any obstacles to joining the Convention and develop a plan to overcome them as soon as possible.

We look forward to hearing from you on plans for the review.

Sincerely,

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Darrell E. Issa  
Member of Congress

Edward J. Markey  
Member of Congress

Bob Filner  
Member of Congress

Janice D. Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

Sander M. Levin  
Member of Congress

John Lewis  
Member of Congress

Rosa L. DeLauro  
Member of Congress

Nick J. Rahall II  
Member of Congress

James L. Oberstar  
Member of Congress
Collin C. Peterson  
Member of Congress

Pete Stark  
Member of Congress

John Conyers, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Charles B. Rangel  
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

James P. Moran  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

Chaka Fattah  
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Peter Welch  
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress
Michael M. Honda  
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

Gary L. Ackerman  
Member of Congress

Maurice D. Hinchey  
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress

Paul W. Hodes  
Member of Congress

Tammy Baldwin  
Member of Congress

Jesse Jackson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress

Sam Farr  
Member of Congress
Lynn C. Woolsey  
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio  
Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge  
Member of Congress

Melvin L. Watt  
Member of Congress

Dennis J. Kucinich  
Member of Congress

Michael H. Michaud  
Member of Congress

Jim McDermott  
Member of Congress

John J. Hall  
Member of Congress

Dale E. Kildee  
Member of Congress

John W. Olver  
Member of Congress

Robert A. Brady  
Member of Congress
Lois Capps  
Member of Congress

Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

Rush D. Holt  
Member of Congress

Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress

Michael E. Capuano  
Member of Congress

José E. Serrano  
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress

Eni F. H. Faleomavaega  
Member of Congress

Susan A. Davis  
Member of Congress

John Garamendi  
Member of Congress