



CHELLIE PINGREE
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
1ST DISTRICT, MAINE

March 13, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Each year, our constituents eagerly watch as the monarch butterfly makes its spectacular migration through many of our states to reach their overwintering site in the mountains of Central Mexico. This remarkable journey is celebrated across the continent and is one of the great natural wonders that Americans look forward to witnessing year after year.

Unfortunately, this magnificent creature is now in peril of being lost to the history books, in large part because of the virtual eradication of milkweed plants from their chief breeding habitat in the Midwest. Milkweed is vital to the monarch's survival and without it they have nowhere to lay their eggs, and no food source to sustain their young.

The chief cause for the decline in milkweed in the Midwest has been the widespread spraying of herbicides in agricultural areas previously rich in milkweed. With the advent of herbicide-resistant genetically engineered crops, the use of herbicides like glyphosate has increased from less than 20 million pounds per year in 1992 to over 250 million pounds per year in 2011. As a result, researchers now estimate that more than half of milkweed has been wiped out in the Midwestern Farm Belt since 1999, and more than 98% of milkweed has been wiped out from corn and soybean areas in Iowa due to the widespread overuse of glyphosate.

With the loss of milkweed habitats in its migration and breeding areas, together with other threats to the monarch from insecticides that kill monarchs directly, and more extreme droughts due to climate change, it is no wonder that the monarch butterfly population has plummeted over the past two decades, falling by more than 90% from the population highs in the mid-1990s.

Recovering the monarch butterfly to ensure that our children and grandchildren will be able to marvel at this natural spectacle requires an immediate and serious investment in conservation efforts across the federal government. The early efforts by farmers, local, state and federal agencies to plant milkweed and to educate the public on the plight of the monarch are laudable, and represent important first steps at stabilizing monarch population levels. However, without a sea-change in how the federal government addresses the use of herbicides, especially as applied to herbicide-resistant crops, vital monarch habitats will simply continue to disappear.

We believe that the Endangered Species Act (ESA) represents the last best chance to save this amazing species and its incredible migration. The Endangered Species Act has the necessary legal mechanisms to ensure that the ecosystems that the monarchs depend on are adequately protected, and the recovery planning process of the ESA is one of the most successful and powerful tools that can restore the monarch butterfly. Protecting the monarchs under the ESA would unify and coordinate conservation efforts, and would bring much-needed resources and funding for monarch conservation efforts.

We are encouraged by the recent announcement by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) that the monarch butterfly may warrant protection as a threatened species, and we urge FWS to conduct a timely review to determine if protections under the Endangered Species Act are warranted. As we have learned from examples like the passenger pigeon, formerly vast populations of species can disappear without the proper protections. The threats to the monarch butterfly are grave and we must use every tool in the toolbox to help save this species. We are encouraged by the early voluntary measures that have begun at restoring milkweed, but these efforts will likely be insufficient if the root causes of the monarch's decline remain unaddressed. We hope that the Administration makes every possible effort to restore the monarch butterfly, and we urge you to be bold in those efforts.

Sincerely,



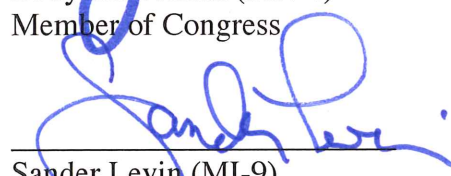
Chellie Pingree (ME-1)
Member of Congress



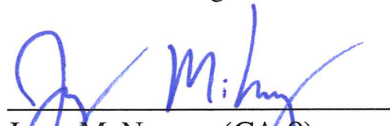
Betty McCollum (MN-4)
Member of Congress



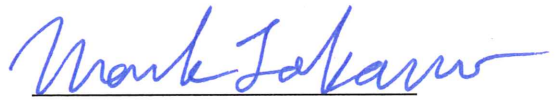
Gwen Moore (WI-4)
Member of Congress



Sander Levin (MI-9)
Member of Congress



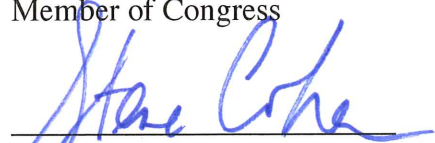
Jerry McNerney (CA-9)
Member of Congress



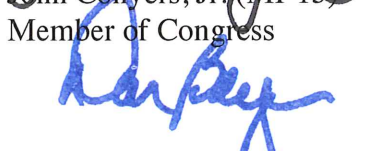
Mark Takano (CA-41)
Member of Congress



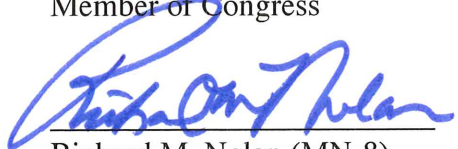
John Conyers, Jr. (MI-13)
Member of Congress



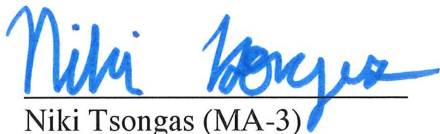
Steve Cohen (TN-9)
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer, Jr. (VA-8)
Member of Congress



Richard M. Nolan (MN-8)
Member of Congress



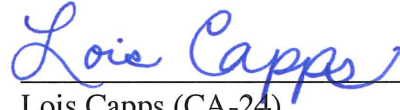
Niki Tsongas (MA-3)
Member of Congress



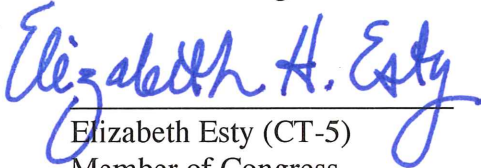
Mark Pocan (WI-2)
Member of Congress



Michael E. Capuano (MA-7)
Member of Congress



Lois Capps (CA-24)
Member of Congress



Elizabeth Esty (CT-5)
Member of Congress



Scott Peters (CA-52)
Member of Congress



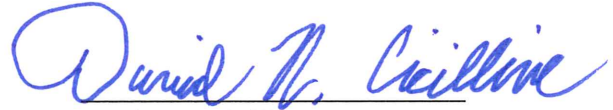
Mike Honda (CA-17)
Member of Congress



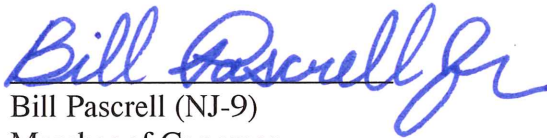
Judy Chu (CA-27)
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke (NY-9)
Member of Congress



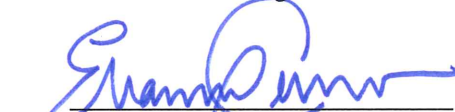
David N. Cicilline (RI-1)
Member of Congress



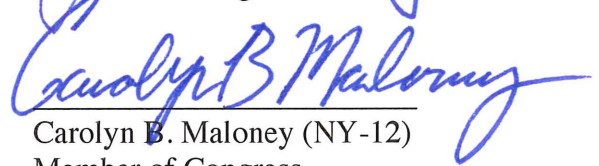
Bill Pascrell (NJ-9)
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky (IL-9)
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II (MO-5)
Member of Congress



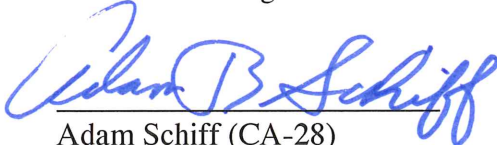
Carolyn B. Maloney (NY-12)
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee (CA-13)
Member of Congress



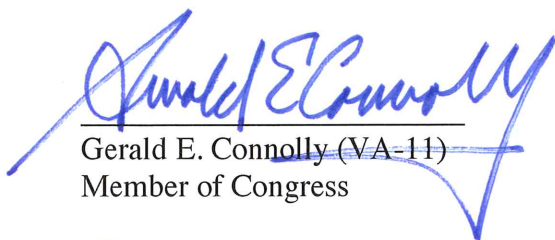
Katherine Clark (MA-5)
Member of Congress

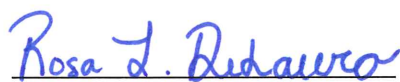


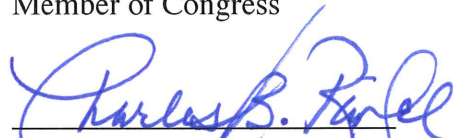
Adam Schiff (CA-28)
Member of Congress

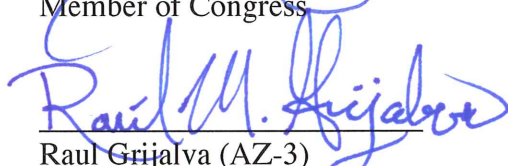


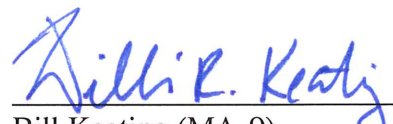
Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-40)
Member of Congress

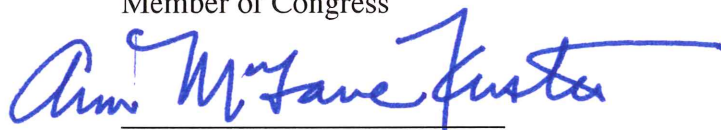

Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)
Member of Congress


Rosa L. DeLauro (CT-3)
Member of Congress



Charles B. Rangel (NY-13)
Member of Congress

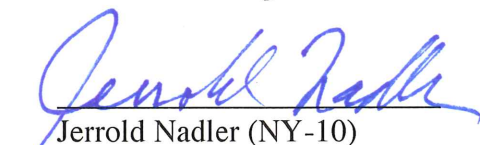

Raul Grijalva (AZ-3)
Member of Congress

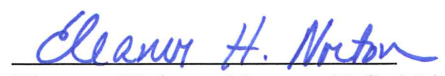

Bill Keating (MA-9)
Member of Congress

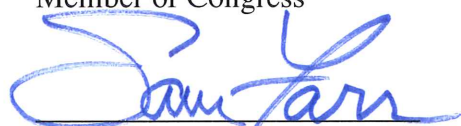

Ann McLane Kuster (NH-2)
Member of Congress

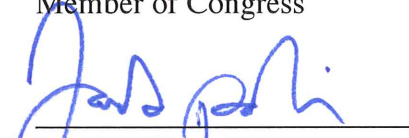

Jim Langevin (RI-2)
Member of Congress

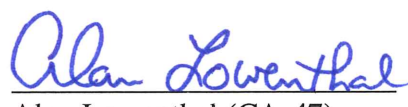

Jackie Speier (CA-14)
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler (NY-10)
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC-AL)
Member of Congress

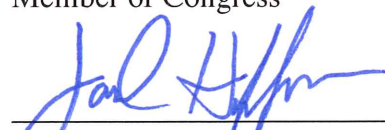

Sam Farr (CA-20)
Member of Congress

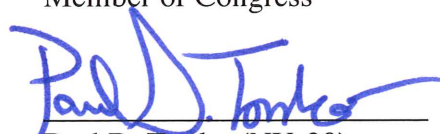

Jared Polis (CO-2)
Member of Congress

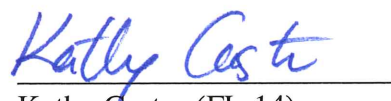

Alan Lowenthal (CA-47)
Member of Congress

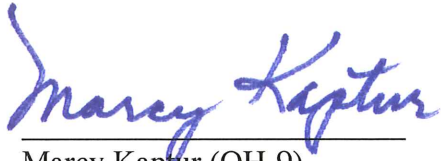

Peter DeFazio (OR-4)
Member of Congress


Earl Blumenauer (OR-3)
Member of Congress


Jared Huffman (CA-2)
Member of Congress


Paul D. Tonko (NY-20)
Member of Congress

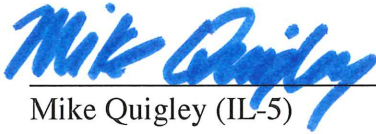

Kathy Castor (FL-14)
Member of Congress



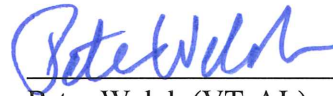
Marcy Kaptur (OH-9)
Member of Congress



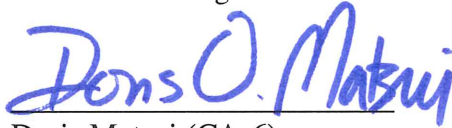
Maxine Waters (CA-43)
Member of Congress



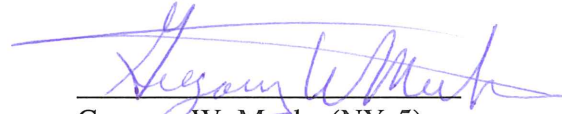
Mike Quigley (IL-5)
Member of Congress



Peter Welch (VT-AL)
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui (CA-6)
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks (NY-5)
Member of Congress