Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 6, 2011

The Honorable John McHugh
Secretary of the Army
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1400

Dear Mr. Secretary:

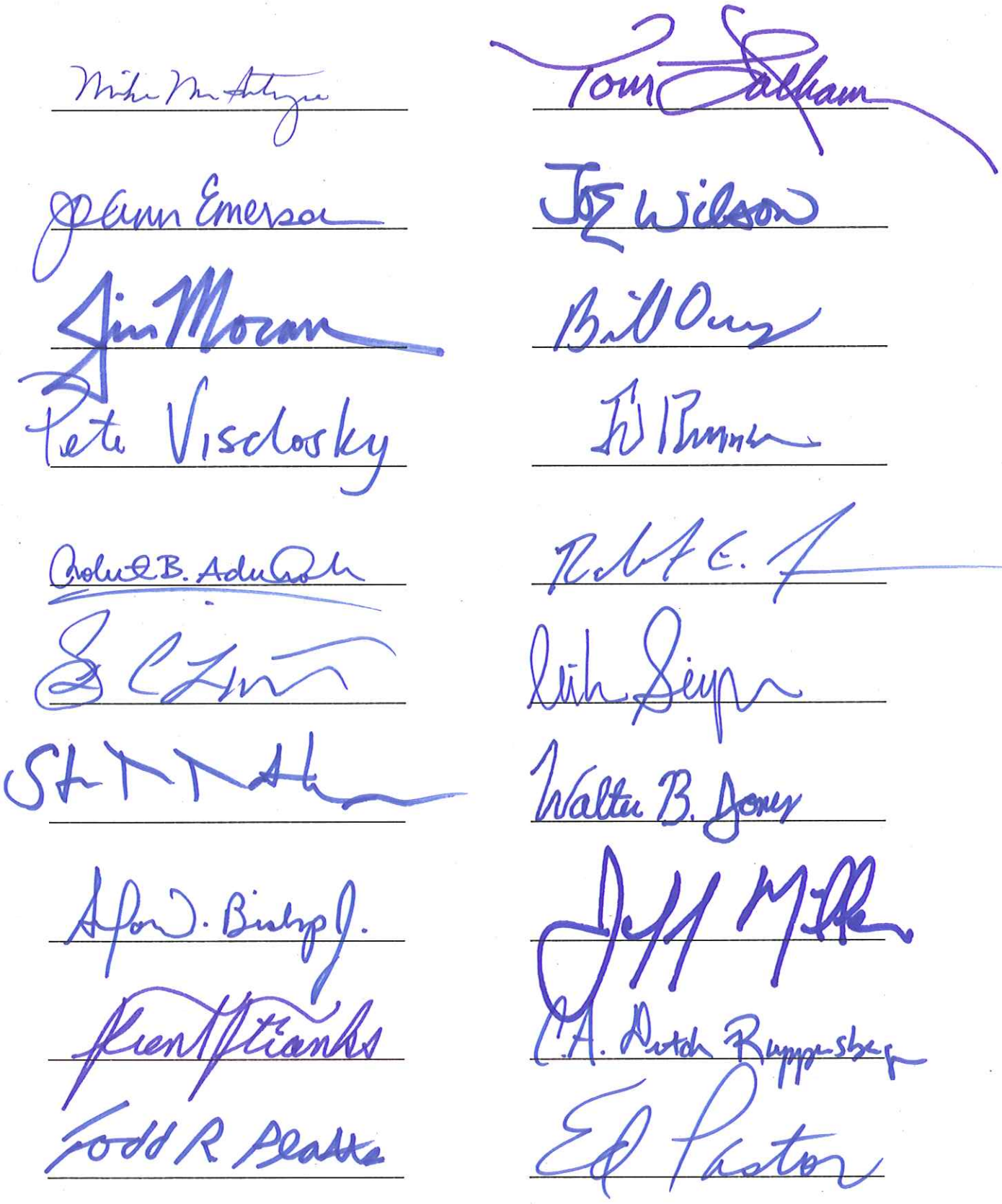
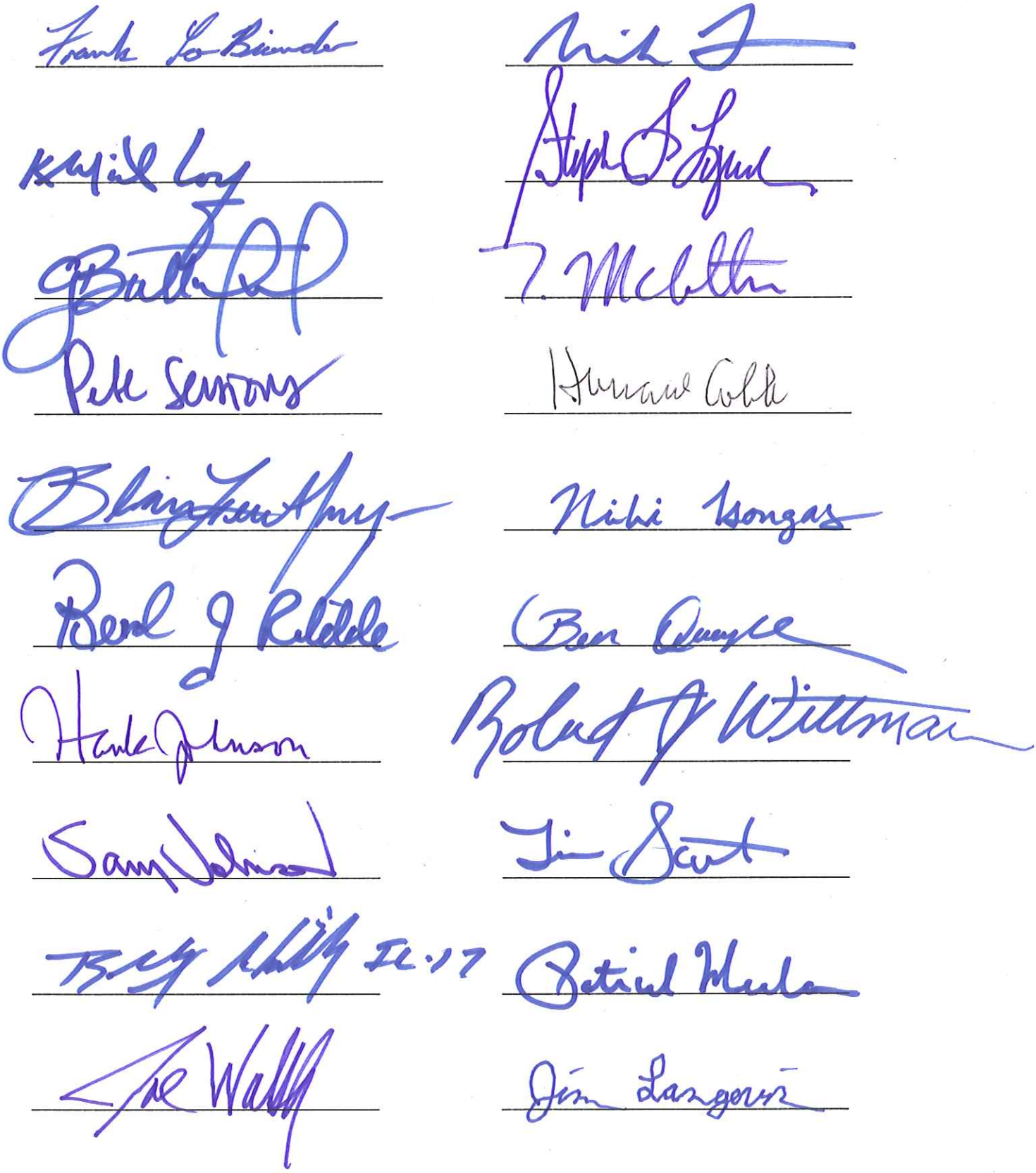
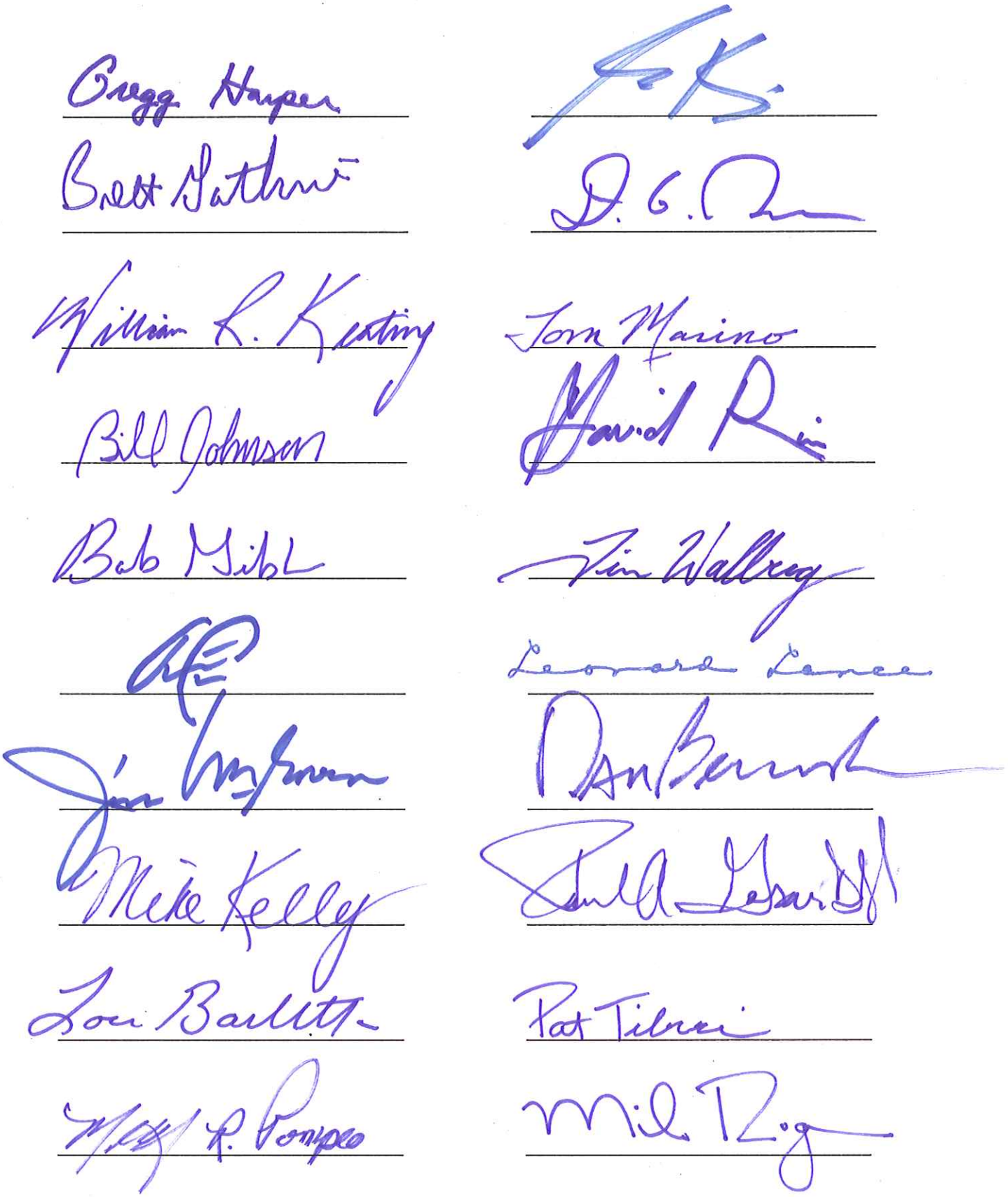
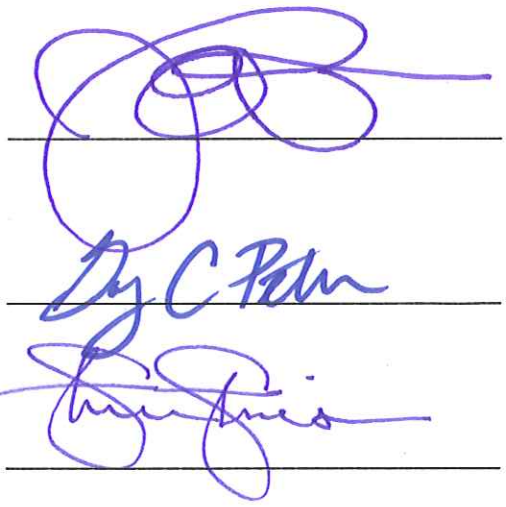
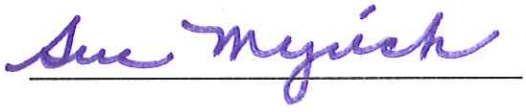
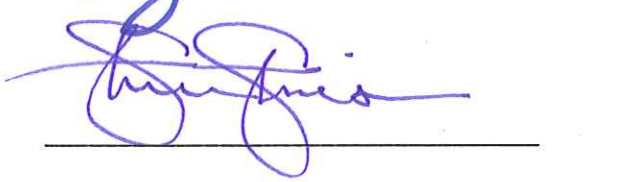
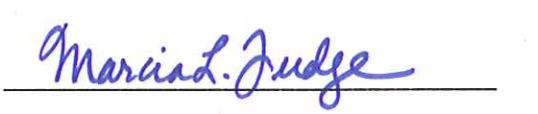
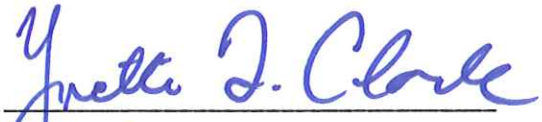
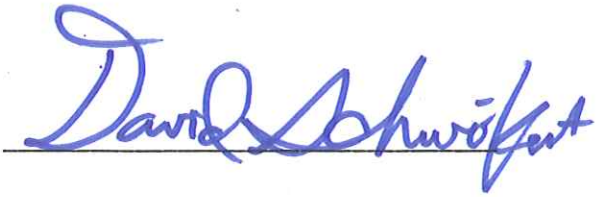
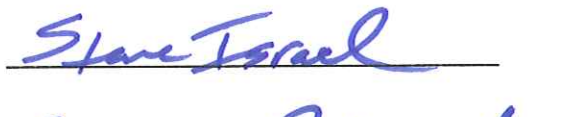
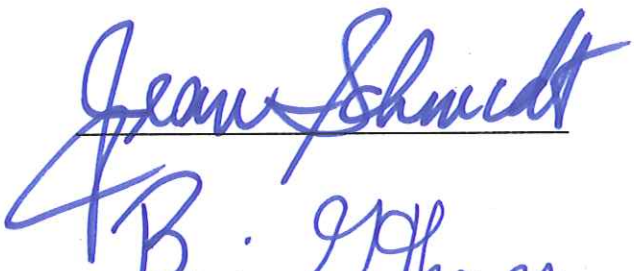
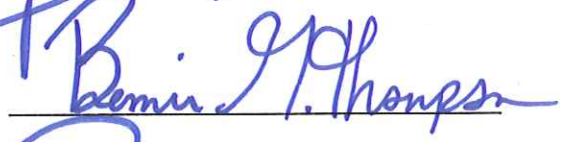
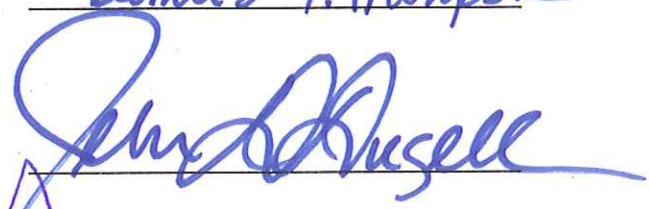
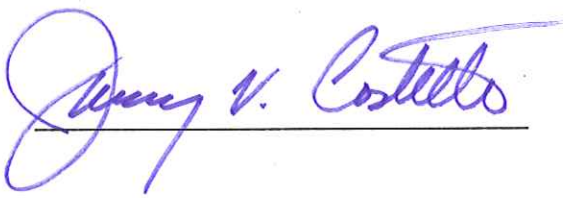
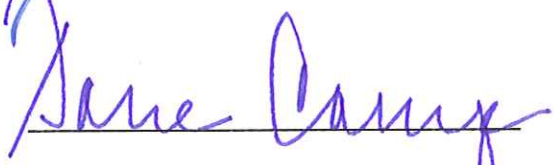
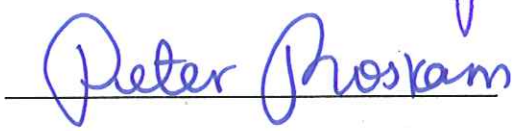
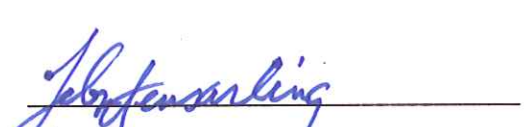
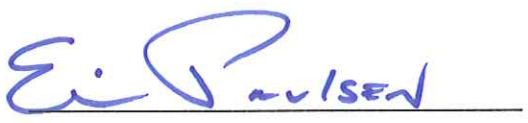
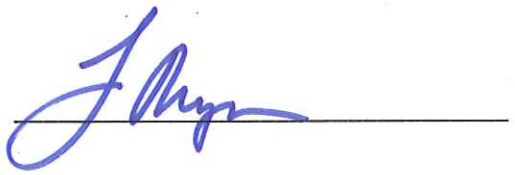
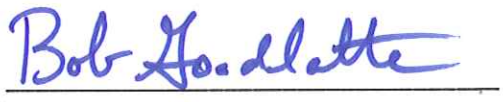
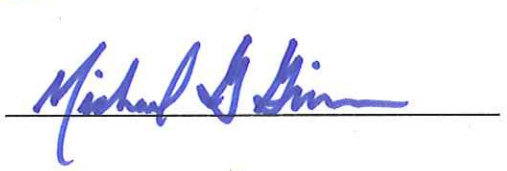
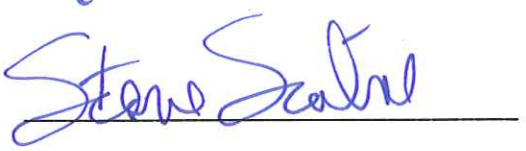
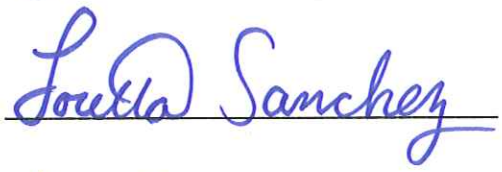
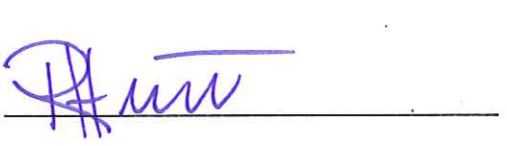
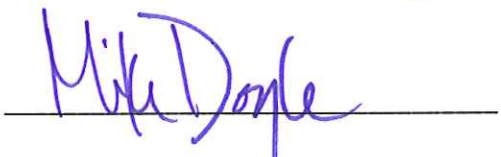
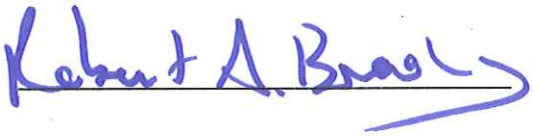
We want to express our concern regarding the Army's combat vehicle modernization plans and their impact on the U.S. industrial base that develops and manufactures these vehicles. Based on the future year's defense program included in the President's fiscal year (FY) 2012 Budget request, the Army has decided to stop tank production for the first time since 1941. Production gaps will also occur during FY 2014 to FY2016 on other important combat systems, such as the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and the Stryker Vehicle. These current plans could end up costing more in the long run and result in lost capacity and readiness.

The FY 2012 budget request we are now considering proposes to terminate production of the Abrams main battle tank in 2013. The end of Abrams production would shut down the unique national asset that is the U.S. tank industrial base even with the expectation that later in the decade the same industrial base will be required to produce modernized Abrams tanks and/or the Ground Combat Vehicle.

The cost of shutdown and restart of Abrams tank production appears to be more than the cost of continued limited production. Instead of reconstituting this vital manufacturing capability at a higher cost, it would seem prudent to invest those select resources in continued Abrams production. We believe it prudent to continue limited production of M1A2 SEP tanks at 70 per year in order to bridge the production gap until the next generation of Abrams begins fielding.

Mr. Secretary, we strongly urge you to consider continued multiyear procurement of the M1A2 SEP tank as you formulate your FY 2013 to FY 2017 investment plan. We would also like your feedback on this recommendation and what is needed to ensure that the tank industrial base is preserved.

Thank you for your consideration and prompt attention to our concerns that potentially impact the warfighting capabilities of our Army and continued availability of critical resources for our troops.

Respectfully,

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