

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 10, 2011

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are asking for a firm commitment from your Administration that it will abandon any and all efforts to house al Qaeda and Taliban terrorists from Guantanamo Bay (Gitmo) as well as other terrorists held by the U.S. Military abroad at the Thomson Correctional Center so that Congress can focus its efforts on acquiring and operating Thomson as a maximum-security federal prison. Until such a commitment is given, Congress will not approve funds to purchase Thomson from the State of Illinois.

Congress' opposition to transferring Gitmo terrorists to the United States is consistent:

- On May 28, 2010, the House voted 282-131, with 114 Democrats joining 168 Republicans, in favor of an amendment to the Department of Defense (DOD) authorization bill that would prohibit the Administration from bringing any Gitmo terrorists into the United States.
- On June 30, 2010, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science, voted to appropriate \$170 million for the federal Bureau of Prisons to purchase and run Thomson as a federal prison with language specifically prohibiting any federal funds from being used to move Gitmo terrorists to Thomson.
- On July 23, 2010, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted to appropriate \$170 million for the federal Bureau of Prisons to purchase and run Thomson as a federal prison with language specifically prohibiting federal funds from being used to move Gitmo terrorists incarcerated inside the United States for detention.
- On July 28, 2010, the House voted 353-69 for an amendment to the Military Construction appropriations bill to prohibit any funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the Department of Defense to be used to renovate or construct any facility within the Continental United States for the purpose of housing any individual who has been detained, at any time after September 11, 2001, at United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.
- On December 17, 2010, the House voted 341-48 in favor of the Department of Defense Authorization Act that included language (Section 1032) prohibiting the Gitmo terrorists from coming onto U.S. soil for any reason. You signed the bill into law on January 7, 2011 (P.L. 111-383). However, you felt it necessary to single it out in a signing statement, stating "Section 1032 represents a dangerous

and unprecedented challenge to critical executive branch authority.”

While Congress remains opposed to turning the Thomson prison into a new detention facility for Gitmo detainees, Administration officials continue to signal there is still a possibility that this plan could be pursued. At a February 14, 2011, briefing on the Administration’s 2012 budget request, Deputy Attorney General James Cole said, “Right now, all our plans for Thomson is (sic) just for Federal prisoners.” At a Senate hearing on February 17, 2011, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said prospects for closing GITMO were “very, very low given very broad opposition to doing that here in Congress.” Also, on March 1, 2011, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder testified that “there are no present intentions” to move people from Guantanamo to any facility in the United States.

While using phrases like “right now,” “very, very low,” and “no present intentions,” does not indicate an immediate desire to pursue the plan, it does solidify a continued aspiration on the part of the Administration to move the plan forward at some point in the future. These comments complicate the effort to get federal funding for the purchase and operation of Thomson as a federal prison. Congressman Frank Wolf, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, was recently quoted in an Associated Press (AP) article expressing his reluctance to provide funding for the Federal Bureau of Prisons to operate the Thomson facility. Congressman Wolf stated, “It’s not in our budget and we will not put that money in our budget because they would then move detainees up from Guantanamo Bay.”

A federal prison at Thomson offers an ideal solution for the people of northwest Illinois as well as our overcrowded federal prison system. Thomson Correctional Facility is ideally suited to help the U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons meet their growing demands for more prison capacity. There is a great need for more capacity in the prison system, and Thomson is an ideal facility that can house up to 2,600 maximum security federal inmates with minor renovations at a great price for taxpayers. Deputy Attorney General Cole went on further to state in the February 14th briefing that “acquiring that prison is a savings of probably somewhere of \$50 million plus over having to build one.”

According to Harley Lappin, Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the current federal prison system is 52 percent over capacity in maximum security, and it is anticipated that the federal prison population will grow by 10,000 to 14,000 inmates in the next two years. This has become a critical safety situation that reduces the guard to prisoner ratio, and jeopardizes the safety of our federal personnel who work in these facilities.

With high unemployment, the people of northwest Illinois are in desperate need for jobs and have been teased time and time again over the last 9 years that Thomson would open as a state or federal prison and provide them with much needed direct or indirect jobs.

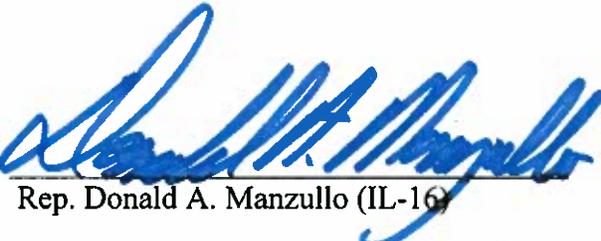
In conclusion, the only way Congress will ever seriously consider approving funds to acquire and operate Thomson as a federal prison is if the Administration commits to

backing off its plan once and for all to move Gitmo detainees to Thomson. We implore your Administration abandon its efforts to house Gitmo detainees at Thomson and join us in turning it into a maximum-security federal prison. We further urge you to announce your support of H.R. 513 and S. 209, companion bills that will permanently ban the transfer of Gitmo terrorists to U.S. soil.

We look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible so we can move forward with this effort. Thank you.

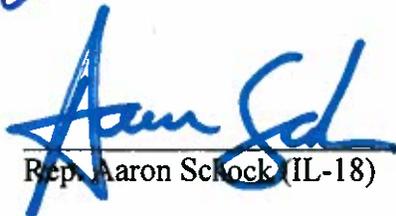
Sincerely yours,


Senator Mark Steven Kirk

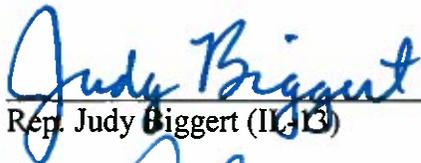

Rep. Donald A. Manzullo (IL-16)


Rep. John Shimkus (IL-19)

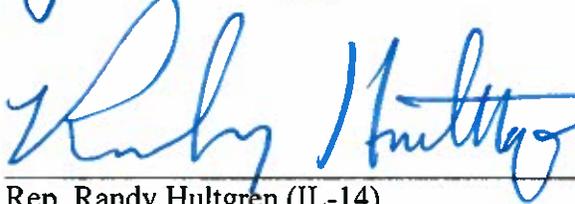

Rep. Joe Walsh (IL-08)


Rep. Aaron Schock (IL-18)


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Rep. Judy Biggert (IL-13)


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