

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 7, 2013

Scott Blackmun  
Chief Executive Officer  
United States Olympic Committee  
27 South Tejon  
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Mr. Blackmun,

We are very concerned with Russia's anti-lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) law and the upcoming Winter Olympics being hosted in Sochi. The protection of an individual's human rights, regardless of a person's background, is of utmost concern to us as Americans and Members of Congress.

As you are aware, Russia's recently enacted law purports to protect children by prohibiting support for LGBT people in the country. In the wake of the law there have been an increasing number of anti-LGBT hate crimes reported by the media in Russia. We are concerned about the treatment of athletes and spectators traveling to Sochi for the 2014 Winter Olympics who disagree with Russia's violation of the human rights of LGBT people.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), in response to public pressure, recently invoked Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter to discourage those participating in the winter games from speaking out against Russia's violation of human rights. While we agree that the Olympics are a time of friendly competition where displays of political disagreement are not appropriate, we are deeply troubled that the International Olympic Committee would find raising awareness of the abuse of an entire population's human rights to be a political statement in violation of Rule 50.

We call on the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) to ensure that any American athlete, or someone associated with an American team, is afforded the right to show solidarity with, and support of, LGBT people around the globe to be free from discrimination and harm. Wearing a pin or another outward manifestation of solidarity with LGBT athletes should not be defined as

'political' if it is not intended to support any clear political party or position but is intended, instead, to highlight the spirit of the Olympic Games, which celebrates the unique humanity of all athletes from every country and culture.

While we disagree that the wearing of a pin or a gesture to highlight Russia's egregious law and treatment of LGBT people is a demonstration prohibited by Rule 50, we do note that Rule 50, section 1.6 permits for exceptions, should that become necessary given the political implications of this issue.

Equally as concerning is the impact that Rule 50 will have on LGBT athletes. We would like clarity as to whether a gay, lesbian, or bisexual athlete would be in violation of Rule 50 or Russian law for publicly recognizing or being seen with a same-sex spouse or partner during the Olympics in Sochi. For instance, would an athlete be subject to reprimand or arrest if, during an awards ceremony or interview, they discuss their same-sex spouse or partner? Such a show of appreciation for the love and support that loved ones give to Olympic athletes is extremely common and would never be considered a political statement coming from a straight athlete.

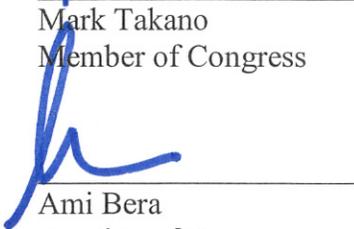
The United States Olympic Committee should provide guidelines to those American Olympic athletes who may want to demonstrate support for LGBT individuals and others facing persecution in Russia by clarifying how, in keeping with the spirit of the Olympic Games, they may nonetheless exercise their right to free expression and manifest their public solidarity during the Games in Sochi.

We look forward to your response regarding how USOC is working with the IOC to ensure that athletes will not be punished for recognizing a loved one or standing up against hate and violence at the Winter Olympics being hosted by Russia in Sochi.

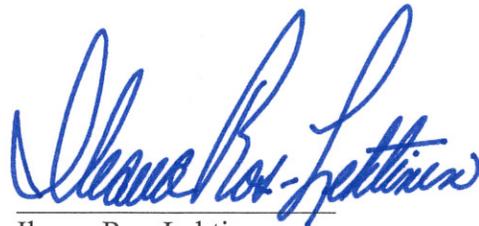
Sincerely,



Mark Takano  
Member of Congress



Ami Bera  
Member of Congress



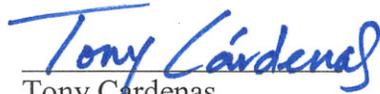
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

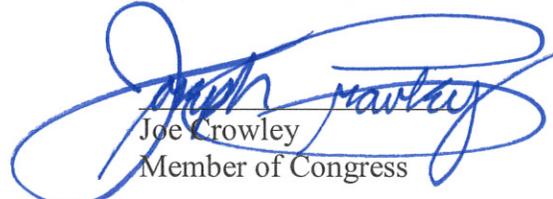
  
Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

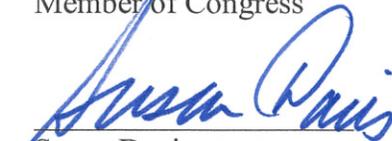
  
Lois Capps  
Member of Congress

  
Tony Cardenas  
Member of Congress

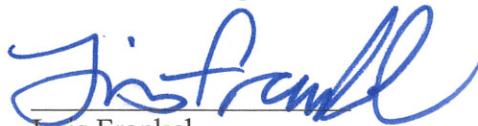
  
Matt Cartwright  
Member of Congress

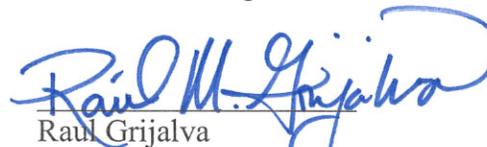
  
David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

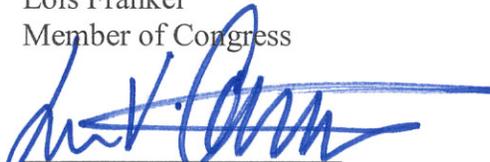
  
Joe Crowley  
Member of Congress

  
Susan Davis  
Member of Congress

  
Eliot Engel  
Member of Congress

  
Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress

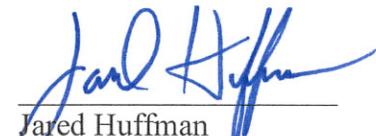
  
Raul Grijalva  
Member of Congress

  
Luis Gutierrez  
Member of Congress

  
Richard Hanna  
Member of Congress

  
Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress

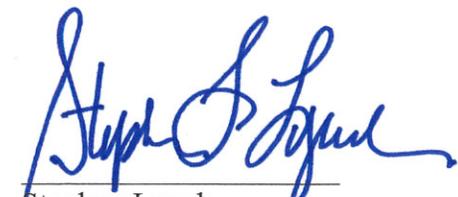
  
Mike Honda  
Member of Congress

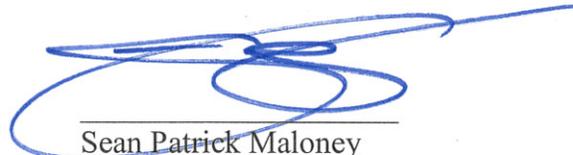
  
Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress

  
Steve Israel  
Member of Congress

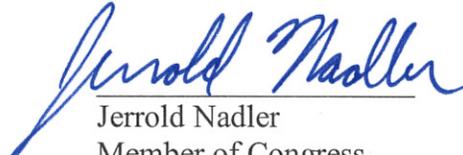
  
Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

  
Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

  
Stephen Lynch  
Member of Congress

  
Sean Patrick Maloney  
Member of Congress

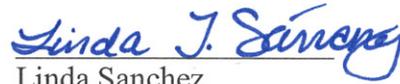
  
Jim Moran  
Member of Congress

  
Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

  
Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

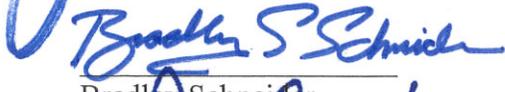
  
Jared Polis  
Member of Congress

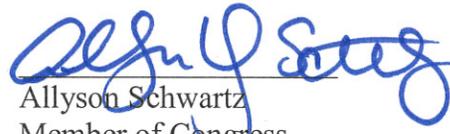
  
Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress

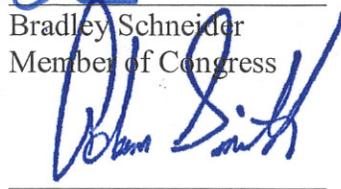
  
Linda Sanchez  
Member of Congress

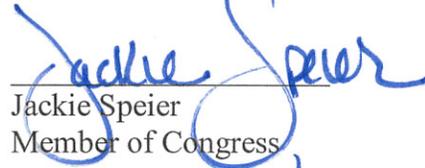
  
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

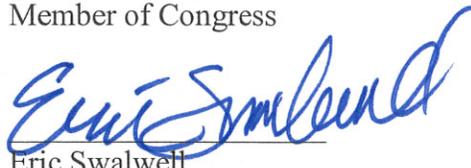
  
Adam Schiff  
Member of Congress

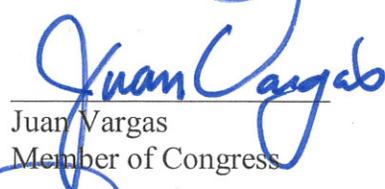
  
Bradley Schneider  
Member of Congress

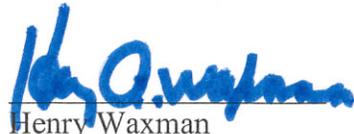
  
Allyson Schwartz  
Member of Congress

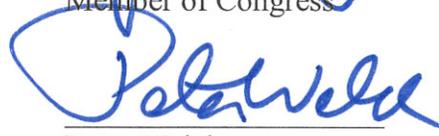
  
Adam Smith  
Member of Congress

  
Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress

  
Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress

  
Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

  
Henry Waxman  
Member of Congress

  
Peter Welch  
Member of Congress



Kyrsten Sinema  
Member of Congress