

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 14, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Mark Green
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Pompeo and Administrator Green:

We write today to express support for the Administration's recent efforts to support Burma in the run-up to Parliamentary elections set for later this year, and to encourage continued robust U.S. engagement in this regard over the coming year. Although elections will not be held until the end of 2020, preparations must begin well in advance to ensure they are free and fair.

Burma's 2020 elections are a crucial next step towards institutionalizing democracy and preventing backsliding into authoritarian rule. Free and fair elections will buoy supporters of democracy, and narrow the likelihood of a retrenchment of illiberal forces within the government. Free and fair elections can help increase unity in a Burma still afflicted with conflict and religious and ethnic strife. Illegitimate elections would only worsen these problems, and possibly cause escalation in conflict.

Further institutionalizing democracy is also important to increase Burma's resilience in the face of external challenges, such growing Chinese Communist Party influence in numerous aspects of Burmese society. Working with the Burmese government and civil society in advance of these elections is important to demonstrating the value of U.S. partnership.

We were encouraged by the Administration's dedication of funds last year to election assistance. This year, it is imperative that the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) increase that assistance, particularly to civil society organizations. In particular, we believe it is important to prioritize the following areas:

- Providing the necessary infrastructure for free and fair elections, including strengthening the Union Election Commission to function as an independent electoral management body and establishing regulatory frameworks that foster open and transparent processes;
- Supporting independent media outlets and local journalists to provide high-quality coverage and analysis of both the pre-election period and the election itself;

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo and the Honorable Mark Green

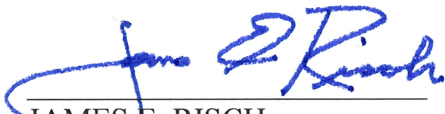
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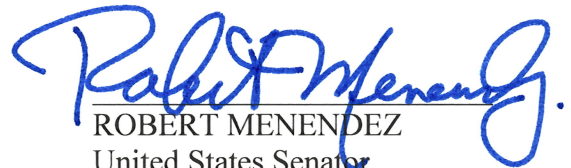
- Supporting civic education, media literacy among the general public, voter education training, capacity building for “get out the vote” campaigns, and civil society efforts to conduct independent election monitoring efforts; and
- Building the capacity of political parties, particularly newly consolidated political parties representing ethnic minorities, so that all political actors can compete on an equal playing field.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to continuing to work with the State Department and USAID to ensure robust U.S. engagement in the lead up to Burma’s elections in 2020.

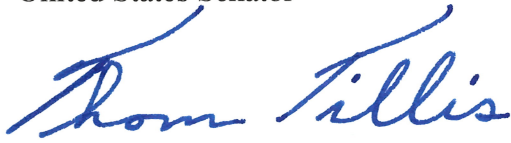
Sincerely,



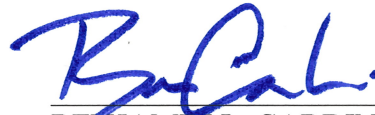
JAMES E. RISCH
United States Senator



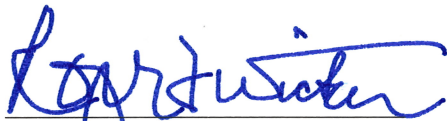
ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator



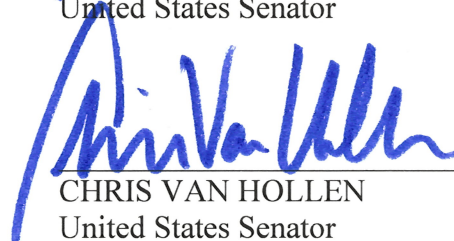
THOM TILLIS
United States Senator



BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
United States Senator



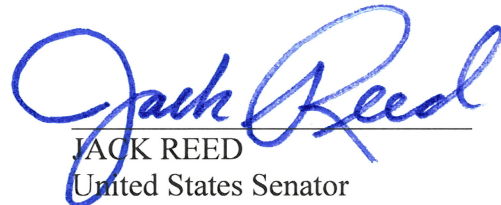
ROGER F. WICKER
United States Senator



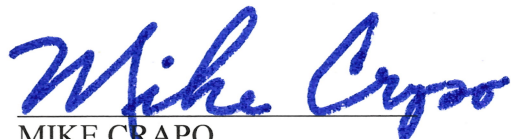
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
United States Senator



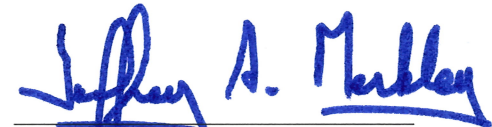
TODD YOUNG
United States Senator



JACK REED
United States Senator



MIKE CRAPO
United States Senator



JEFFREY A. MERKLEY
United States Senator

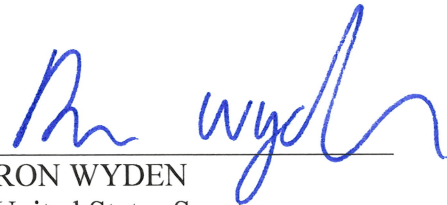
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MARCO RUBIO
United States Senator



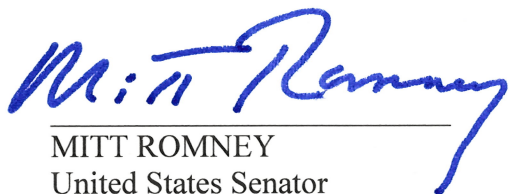
RON WYDEN
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United States Senator



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