

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 22, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
The President
The White House

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our strong concern that you are considering establishing a “no first use” nuclear weapons policy for the United States. While no American wishes to employ nuclear weapons in conflict, establishing a no first use policy would weaken the nation’s security and make the world less safe by crippling America’s nuclear deterrence posture—a stabilizing agent for the cause of peace across decades—and further incentivize allies and enemies alike to develop nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them.

The possession and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by hostile countries and violent extremists continues to present the utmost threat to the safety and security of the United States and our allies. In this context, our nuclear deterrent remains critically important. A robust, reliable nuclear force consisting of strategic bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles places our rivals on notice that there is no advantage to be gained in seeking to match U.S. nuclear forces or utilizing other weapons of mass destruction and reassures our allies dependent on our nuclear “umbrella.” In doing so, our nuclear capability coupled with the will to defend our nation and meet our commitments continues to promote peace and make the world safer.

Establishing a no first use policy, however, would severely reduce the value of our nuclear deterrent, limit the options of America’s future leaders to safeguard the legacy of peace, and undermine the credibility of our alliances. As you are well aware, some hostile countries possess biological, chemical, and radiological weapons that have the potential to kill scores of Americans or allied citizens. Terrorist organizations actively seek the expertise to build their own weapons and steal material from countries that possess it. It would be exceedingly unwise to forgo the option of a nuclear strike against such enemies to end a conflict on terms favorable to the United States and our allies. As the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review affirmed, and as recent reports indicate, a no first use policy could also shatter the trust of our closest allies who have relied on their U.S. security partnerships and potentially lead them to instead seek nuclear weapons of their own. This would escalate nuclear proliferation and only increase the likelihood of a nuclear altercation in the future.

For all these reasons, and several others, Democratic and Republican administrations alike have rejected a no first use policy since the end of World War II. It is unsurprising that Secretary of State Kerry, Secretary of Defense Carter, and Secretary of Energy Moniz reportedly support maintaining this long-standing posture and expressed serious concerns about the adoption of a no first use policy at a recent National Security Council meeting.

In short, therefore, we urge you to recognize that nuclear deterrence remains vitally important to our national security and reject any policy that weakens this posture. Thank you for your consideration of our views, and we look forward to continuing to dialogue with you and your Administration on this important issue.

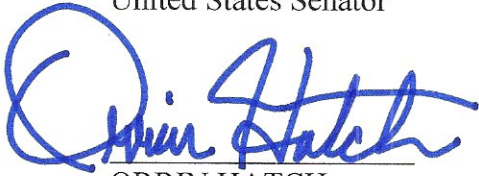
Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
United States Senator



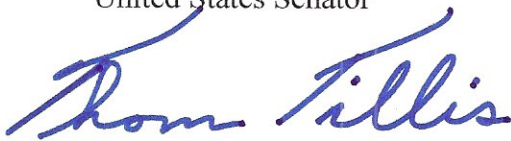
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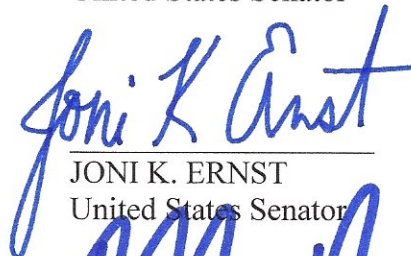
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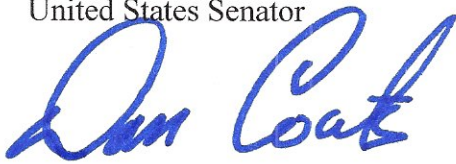
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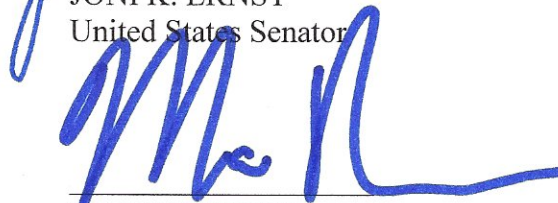
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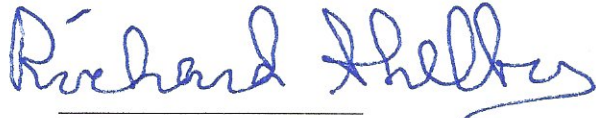
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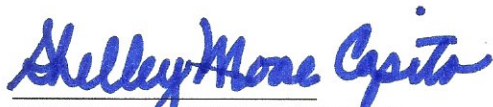

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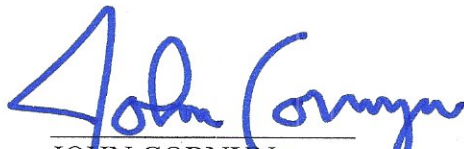

DAVID VITTER
United States Senator

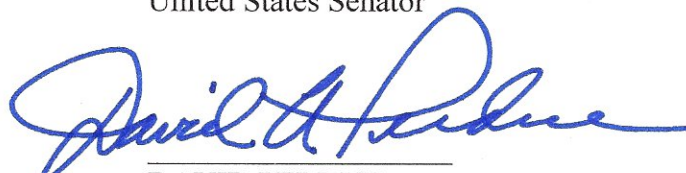

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