COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

March 15, 2011

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner:

We are writing to urge that in the upcoming negotiations for a budget bill for Fiscal Year 2011, you as Speaker move the House in the direction of protecting the essential operating budget of the Social Security Administration (SSA). H.R.1, the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, previously passed by the House, cut SSA's operating budget by $1.7 billion below the level needed to provide basic service to the public. SSA estimates that a cut of that magnitude could force it to shut down for up to four weeks. A shutdown of that length would delay SSA's processing of benefit applications for nearly 700,000 new retirees, widows, disabled workers, and children; add to the already unacceptable number of unprocessed disability appeals hearings; and prevent SSA from answering nearly 8 million phone calls from current and future beneficiaries. Social Security didn't cause the current deficits and the services provided by SSA are indispensible.

For nearly 54 million Americans, Social Security is the bedrock of economic security. The benefits are modest, averaging about $14,000 a year. But for six out of ten recipients, that is more than half of their income. Current Social Security beneficiaries depend on SSA to answer their questions, correct errors in their checks, and make sure their money is sent to the right bank account. The 160 million workers who are paying into Social Security depend on SSA to keep their wage records updated and to process their applications for benefits promptly when they become eligible. Millions of families depend on SSA to issue Social Security numbers to their new babies so that they, too, can receive the family protections provided by Social Security.

In addition to the impact on current and future beneficiaries, the cuts in H.R. 1 would actually cost taxpayers money by failing to fully fund SSA's fight against waste, fraud, and abuse. Although only a very small percentage of beneficiaries are receiving benefits in error or in the wrong amounts, the savings from correcting those overpayments are substantial – a return on investment of $7 to $10 for every dollar we invest. The cuts in H.R. 1 alone would prevent SSA from recovering between $196 million and $280 million in overpayments – money that belongs to the Social Security trust fund and the workers who contribute to it.

Americans of all ages are counting on us to stand up for Social Security and not undermine its ability to pay promised benefits and serve the public. We ask you to join us in taking a firm stand on protecting SSA's ability to provide critical services to Americans.

Sincerely,

Gary L. Ackerman

Steven R. Rothman

Jerry McNerney

Murray Kaptur

[illegible]

Marcia L. Fudge

Gerald E. Connolly

Jim McGovern

Joan Altmire

Donna F. Edwards

Kurt Schrader

Terry Lynch

Lloyd Doggett

Kathy Castor

David N. Cicilline

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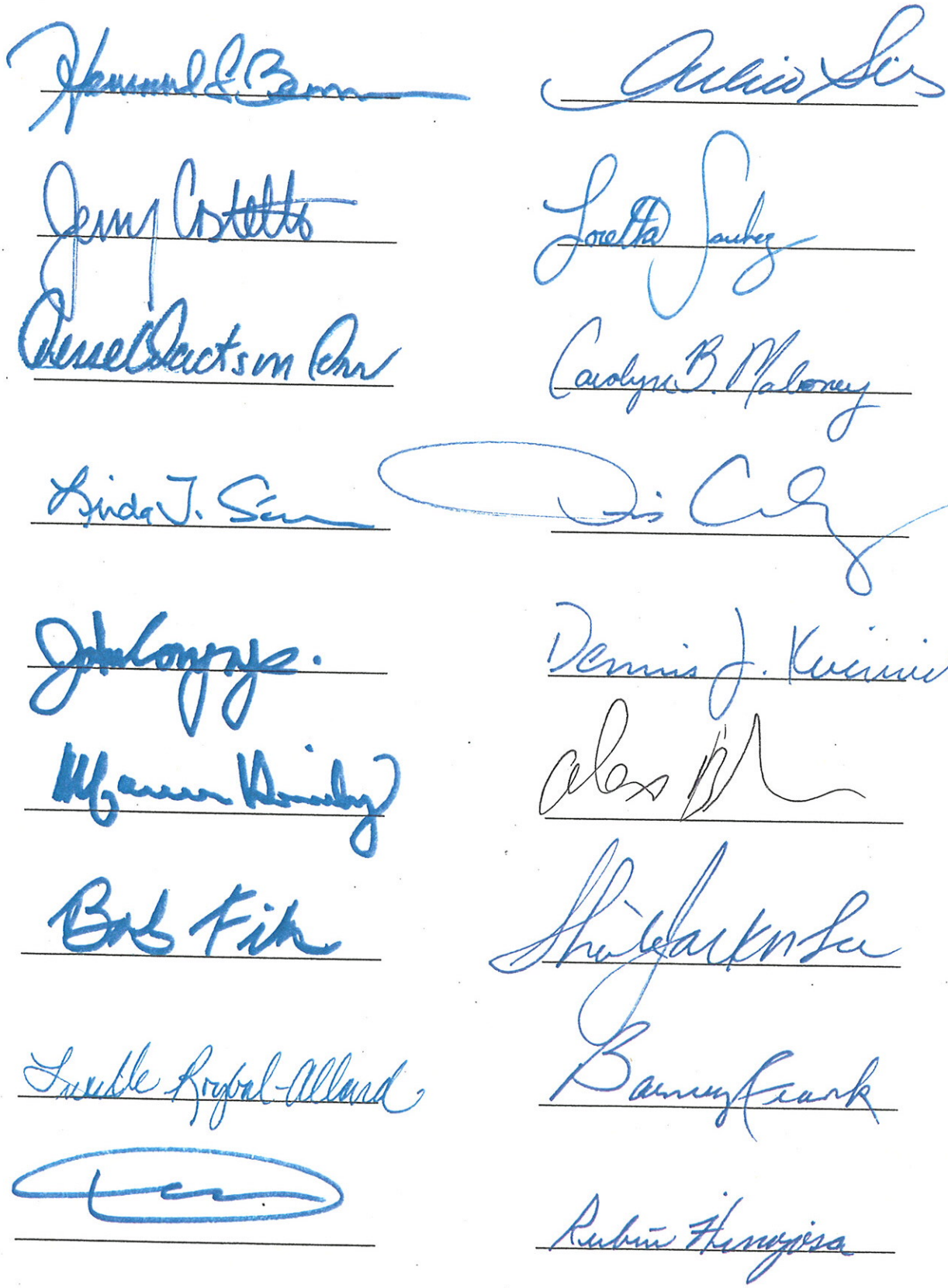
Corrine Brown



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Bill Pascrell

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The Honorable Joe Baca

The Honorable Karen Bass

The Honorable Xavier Becerra

The Honorable Shelley Berkley

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The Honorable Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.

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