



**Press Release: For Immediate Release
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Senators and Representatives Support Ban on Landmines: Letters Sent to President Obama

WASHINGTON, D.C.: A letter signed by 68 senators, asking the administration to join the 1997 Landmine Ban Treaty, was delivered to President Obama on Tuesday. The signers of the letter include 10 Republicans and two Independents and constitute more than the two-thirds of the Senate needed to ratify a treaty.

Sens. Patrick Leahy (VT-D) and George Voinovich (OH-R) circulated the Senate letter, and a similar letter in support of the Senate initiative, circulated by Reps. James McGovern (MA-D) and Darrell Issa (CA-R) in the House of Representatives, was also delivered to President Obama. The existence of the letters was made public on May 8, but the final versions, with all signatures, was delivered Tuesday.

In describing the use of antipersonnel landmines, Sen. Patrick Leahy said, "The idea that a modern military like ours would be using indiscriminate, victim-activated weapons today is hard to reconcile with our current military objectives, particularly when you consider that the two countries (Iraq and Afghanistan) where our troops are fighting are parties to the treaty and the members of the coalition that we are leading in Afghanistan are also parties to the treaty."

The administration launched a review of U.S. landmine policy late last year, and in the letters the legislators say that they are "confident that through a thorough, deliberative review the Administration can identify any obstacles to joining the Convention and develop a plan to overcome them as soon as possible."

Rep. James McGovern, who circulated the letter in the House, said, "A thorough review will show that the U.S. can play an even greater role in the world on landmines by formally joining the ban. The Senate letter demonstrates the support is there."

The Congressional letters follow a letter sent to President Obama on March 22 by leaders from 65 national nongovernmental organizations that also urge the U.S. to relinquish antipersonnel landmines and join the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty immediately.

This demonstration of Congressional support for the international treaty banning landmines was seen as a step in the right direction by nongovernmental organization Handicap International, which has been involved in landmine clearance and victim assistance efforts since the early 1990s.

"Over the past two decades, our staff have helped tens of thousands of landmine victims in dozens of countries around the world," Wendy Batson, executive director of Handicap International, said. "U.S. participation in the treaty will bring the day closer to when this heinous weapon will no longer threaten future generations. May that day come soon, she added.

[more]

[Read the Senate Letter](#)

[Read the House Letter](#)

[Read the NGO Letter](#)

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Handicap International works to improve the living conditions of people living in disabling situations in post-conflict or low-income countries around the world. Our programs reduce and address the consequences of disabling accidents and disease; clear landmines and prevent mine related accidents through education; respond fast and effectively to natural and civil disasters in order to limit serious and permanent injuries and assist survivors with social and economic reintegration; and advocate for the universal recognition of the rights of the disabled through national planning and advocacy. Handicap International is a co-founder of the Cluster Munition Coalition and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, which was awarded the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.