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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

December 2, 2010

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS

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The Honorable Mitch McConnell
361-A Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Kyl
730 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators McConnell and Kyl:

I write to express my strong support for the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) and urge you to support its ratification in the closing weeks of the 111th Congress.

As you know, Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush crafted and ratified the original START I that expired December 2009. This historic treaty reduced the total number of nuclear warheads worldwide and established unprecedented verification measures. Fortunately, President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev were willing to continue these policies by signing New START in April 2010. This common-sense treaty is critical to our national security and I urge you to support its ratification for the reasons outlined below.

First, New START is the cornerstone to resetting relations with a former rival. A strong bilateral relationship with Russia is beneficial to the United States on a number of issues, most notably in curbing Iran's nuclear program. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's nuclear ambitions pose a serious threat to the United States and our allies—especially Israel. Due to improved relations, we secured a commitment from Russia to support and enforce punitive sanctions against Iran. A failure to ratify New START may once again cool relations with Russia and ultimately jeopardize our efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon capability.

Second, New START is a priority to the international community. At the NATO Summit on November 19 and 20 in Lisbon, Portugal, our European allies expressed their strong support for the treaty. In deciding whether or not to ratify this treaty, the United States has the opportunity to show it can be trusted to honor its commitments and remain a leader on foreign policy; this is especially important in light of the unfortunate Wikileaks controversy.

Third, New START is important from a security standpoint. Since the former treaty expired last year, there has been no monitoring on the ground of either arsenal. By making modest reductions to the two largest nuclear stockpiles in the world and applying appropriate verification measures, everyone wins; not only do we diminish the threat of nuclear war, but we reduce the probability of terrorists or rogue states such as Iran or North Korea from getting their hands on loose nuclear material. At a time when terrorist networks are actively seeking to acquire nuclear material, we must reinstate these safeguards as soon as possible.

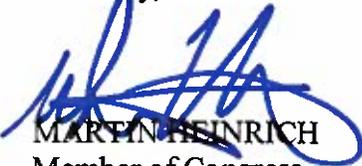
Ratifying New START is also important to the future of our national laboratories. As a Member of Congress representing New Mexico on the House Armed Services Committee, I fully appreciate your concerns regarding the modernization of our national laboratories, and I strongly support your efforts to ensure their long-term viability. Our national laboratories employ some of the best and brightest minds in the country and their mission is essential to the credibility of our nation's deterrent. That is why I was encouraged by the Obama Administration's promise to increase funding for the labs by \$10 billion over the next decade. Moreover, the recent pledge of an additional \$4 billion guarantees that our laboratories will have the tools necessary to ensure that our nuclear weapons are safe, secure, and reliable for years to come. Our nation's three lab directors— George Miller of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory; Michael Anastasio of the Los Alamos National Laboratory; and Paul Himmert of Sandia National Laboratories— even offered their assurances that the funding “sustains the science, technology and engineering base.” If New START is not ratified, I fear these future investments could be lost.

Further, I take comfort in the treaty's endorsement from a bi-partisan group of well-respected military leaders including Secretary of Defense Robert Gates; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen; and high-ranking members of the Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Clinton, and George W. Bush administrations. National security experts such as George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, James Baker, Colin Powell and Brent Scowcroft all support the treaty as well.

Finally, New START has already been the subject of an unprecedented 21 official hearings and briefings by the Senate Foreign Relations, Armed Services, and Intelligence Committees over the last eight months. This treaty has received a full examination and deserves an up-or-down vote.

For the reasons outlined above, I urge you to support this treaty by the end of the 111th Congress.

Sincerely,



MARTIN HEINRICH
Member of Congress