

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 10, 2005

Dr. Elias Zerhouni
Director
National Institutes Of Health
1 Center Drive
Mail Stage Code 122, Room B-155
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Dear Dr. Zerhouni:

We write to express our strong opposition to the proposed privatization of Environmental Health Perspectives (EHP). Doing so places at risk the integrity and quality of one of the world's best independent journals covering the area of science that deals with the environment and health. We urge you to reject EHP privatization.

EHP is one of the premier academic peer reviewed journals in the world. It ranks second among one hundred thirty two environmental science journals, and fifth among ninety public environmental and occupational health journals. If it were considered among the general medical journals like the New England Journal of Medicine and JAMA, it would rank tenth. Early signs indicate that this year, all those rankings are likely to increase.

Its value and uniqueness stem, in large part, from its status as a publicly managed journal. For example, EHP's independence directly enhances the quality of the work it publishes. Their conflict of interest policy is among the strictest of peer-reviewed journals. Such a policy might be compromised if the journal was privately published.

In addition, its public funding source allows it to be an open access journal, which means anyone with Internet access can get any EHP article 24 hours after it is accepted for publication. That is essential because the vast majority of published research is available only through increasingly costly journal subscriptions, institutional license fees, or per-article purchases. This closed system leaves the American public -- including physicians, public health professionals, patients and patient groups, students, teachers, librarians and scientists at academic institutions, hospitals, research laboratories, and corporate research centers -- under-informed about important, timely research results they helped finance.

Because EHP is publicly funded, important public health functions are performed that the private sector would be unlikely to support. The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), which runs EHP, provides free monthly copies to those in the developing world, where environmental health problems are, in many cases, the most severe. NIEHS also provides EHP classroom materials for universities and high schools. These non revenue-generating programs

have high public health value and would be at risk if EHP were privatized. The breadth of appeal and academic discipline that uniquely characterizes EHP would also be at risk of sustaining a narrowing of scope more in line with privately run journals.

Finally, NIEHS does a highly efficient job of running EHP. In the last year, the EHP budget was \$3.3 million, which is less than one half of one per cent of the NIEHS budget. In the last four years, they have reduced their budget by fifteen per cent while they have become an open access journal, expanded their reach to other countries, expanded their educational programs, and dramatically increased the quality of the articles. Despite having this record that any private sector establishment would envy, NIEHS is considering still more cost cutting measures to further streamline. The impact of EHP on public health far surpasses its costs.

Privatizing EHP is unnecessary and unwise. It would yield miniscule cost savings while exacting a large cost to public health. We urge you to reject privatizing EHP.

Sincerely,



Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress



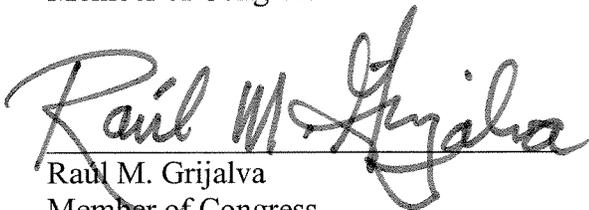
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Mark Udall
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Raul M. Grijalva
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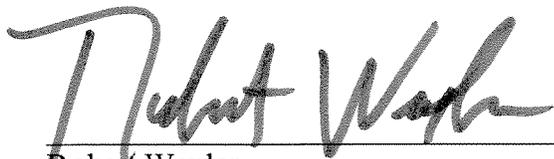
Jim McDermott
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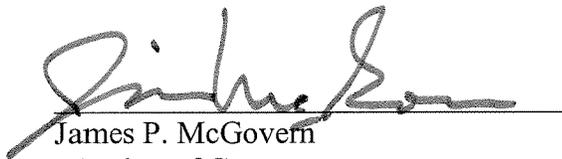
Bernard Sanders
Member of Congress



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Martin O. Sabo
Member of Congress

cc: Dr. David Schwartz