Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 28, 2016

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary of the Department of Commerce
Herbert C. Hoover Building
14th and Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

As you may be aware, the Senate did not include language clarifying the intent of section 539 of the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2016 (Division B of P.L. 114-113), in the short-term continuing resolution that they released on September 22.

Despite the lack of clarifying language in the Senate's proposed short-term continuing resolution, we believe that Congressional intent with regards to section 539 is clear. As Members of Congress, we expect the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to maintain its current role with respect to Internet domain name system functions, including responsibility with respect to the authoritative root zone file and the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) functions.

We urge you to take all appropriate action to ensure the continuation of NTIA's current responsibilities before the existing contract expires on October 1. While we appreciate your assurances regarding the .mil, .gov, .edu, and .us domains, we urge you to take action this week to maintain NTIA's current responsibilities over all Internet domain name functions.

We strongly disagree with President Obama's plans to move forward with the IANA stewardship transition. Numerous concerns remain regarding ICANN's readiness to enforce its own policies, address concerns raised by the Internet's stakeholders, and resist pressure from foreign governments intent on limiting speech and the flow of information on the Internet.

The United States has always maintained responsibility for administrating the critical functions of the Internet. Maintaining this responsibility for IANA functions at NTIA will help ensure that we continue to protect the Internet from foreign governments, international organizations and bad actors.

If you had complied with the spirit of section 539 -- which President Obama signed into law – there would be no transition on October 1. Therefore, we urge you in the strongest terms to not allow the IANA functions contract to expire on October 1.

Sincerely,

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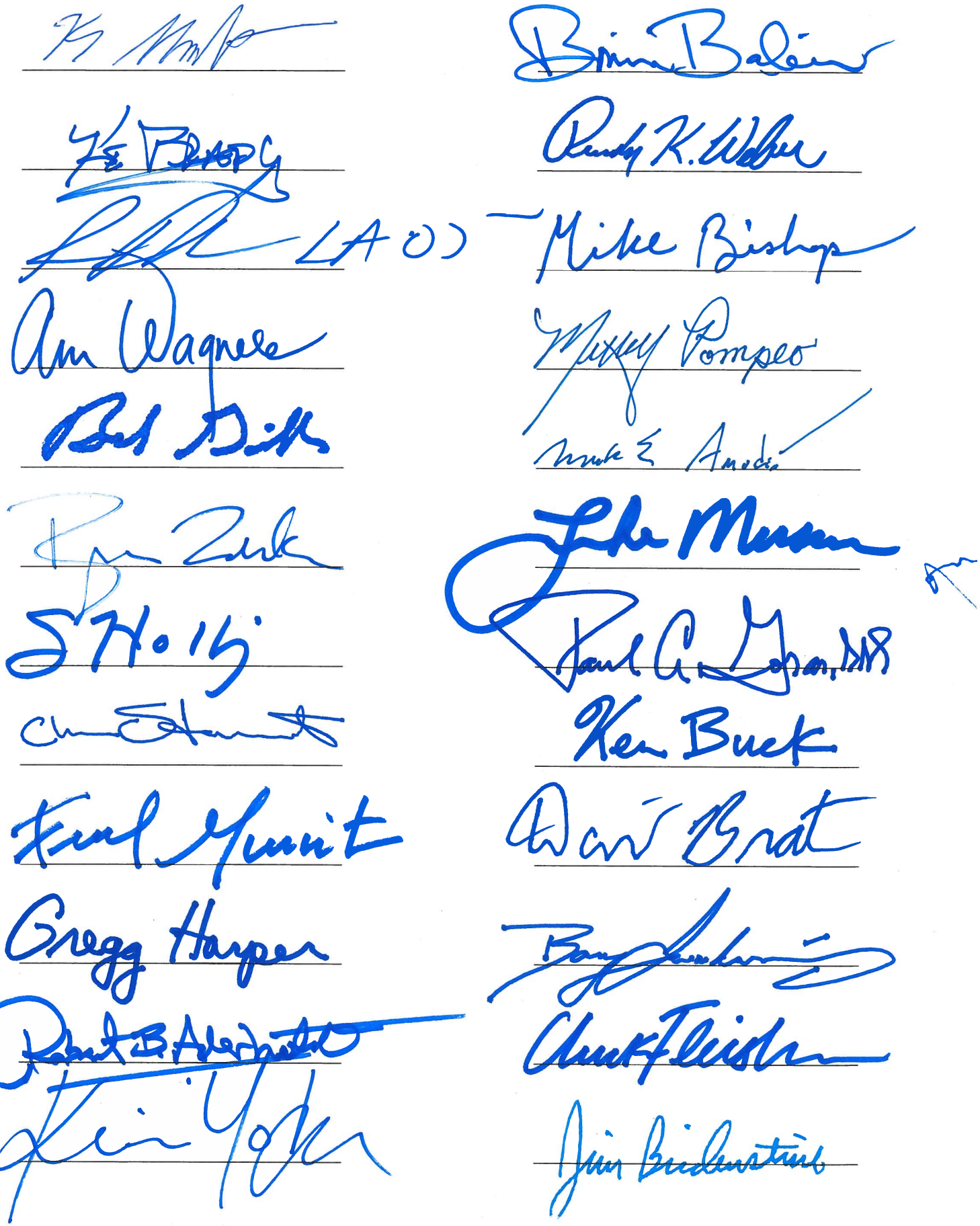

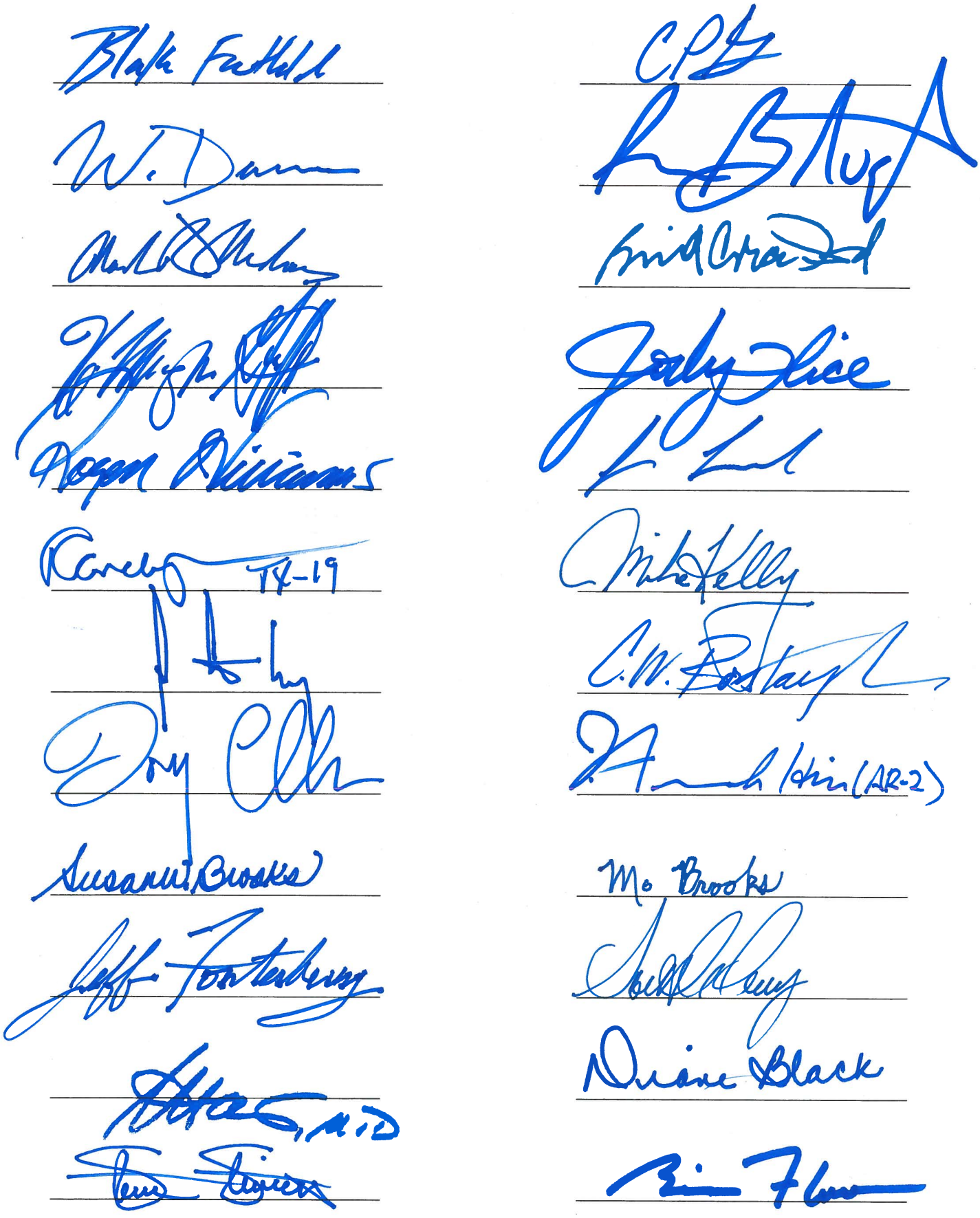

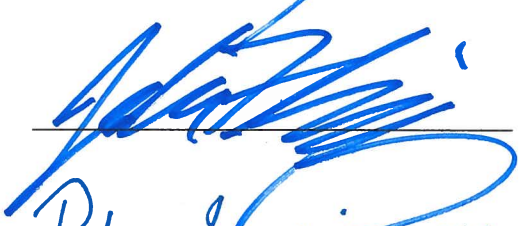

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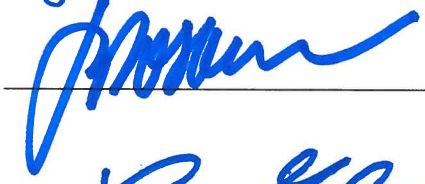

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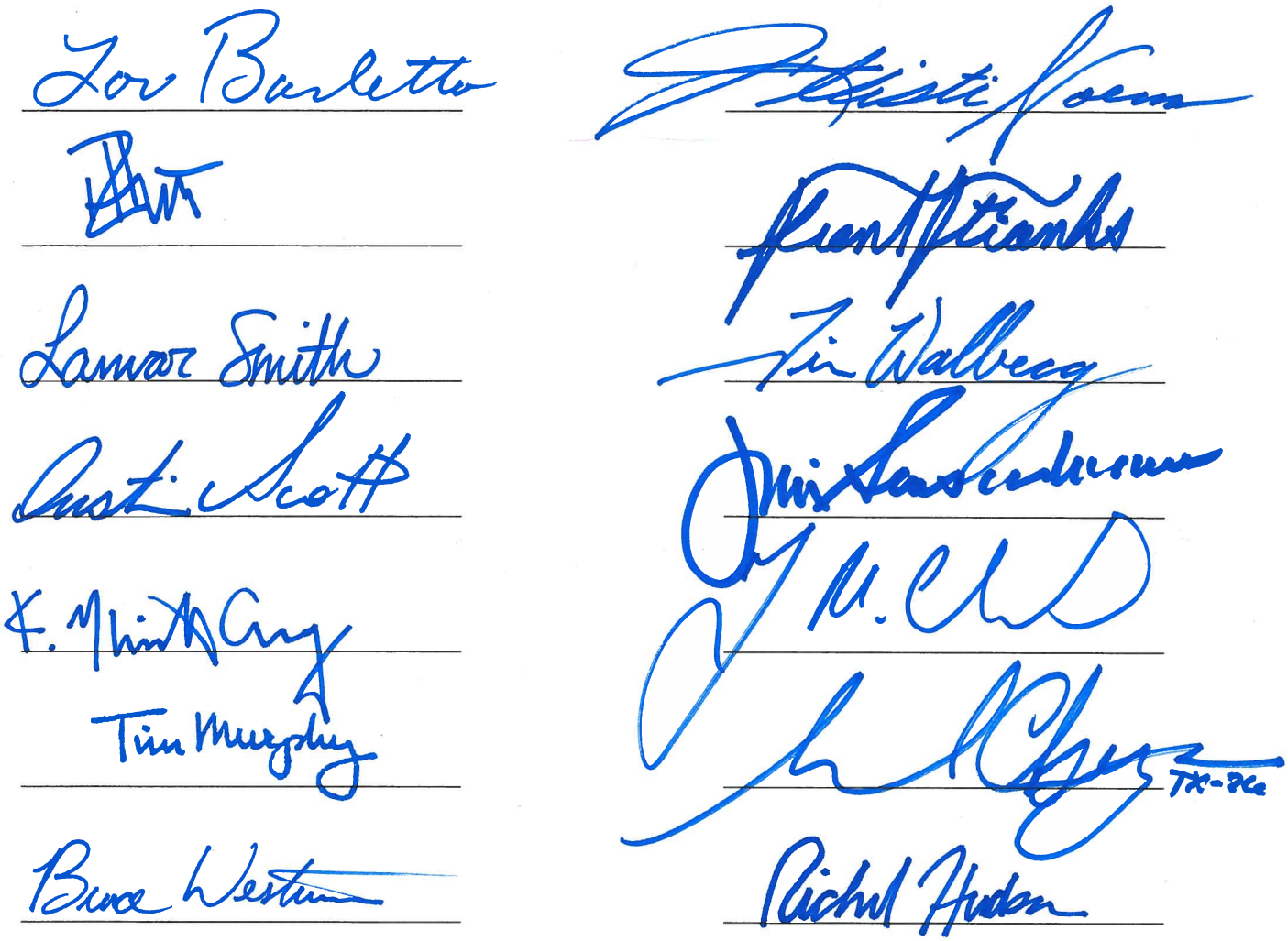
John Ratcliffe