

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 30, 2008

The Honorable Stephen L. Johnson
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Johnson:

We are writing to discuss the worsening problem of light pollution, which has proven adverse effects on nocturnal wildlife, creates a substantial and widespread waste of electricity, and seriously degrades the visibility of our night skies. Articles in newspapers and journals nationwide have documented the growing problem of excessive light at night.

According to the International Dark-Sky Association, which has been tackling this problem for 20 years, light pollution is “any adverse effect of artificial light, including sky glow, glare, light trespass, light clutter, decreased visibility at night, and energy waste.”

Today light pollution hinders viewing the stars for an estimated 99% of Americans. Glare from powerful, poorly designed street and security lighting reduces nighttime visibility and hinders safety on the road. Artificial lighting has been shown to impinge on the mating, migration, and predation behaviors of many nocturnal species of wildlife, thereby affecting entire ecosystems. Perhaps most seriously, evidence now shows that human eyes are far more sensitive than previously thought to light-at-night exposure, and several research teams are exploring its influence on melatonin suppression, circadian rhythms, and human health.

Fortunately, the spread of light pollution is reversible, with straightforward solutions. Much can be done by using well-shielded lighting fixtures that aim their beams only where needed, by reducing excessive illumination levels, or simply by shutting off lights when not needed. Responsible, well-designed outdoor lighting controls glare, improves nighttime visibility and safety, protects biodiversity, and enables healthier lives. Moreover, eliminating light directed uselessly into the sky will save billions of dollars in wasted energy annually and reduce atmospheric emissions.

We all share the widespread public concern about this issue, and we request that the Environmental Protection Agency consider the following steps:

- Codify a formal definition for “light pollution” that captures the detrimental effects that result from unchecked nighttime illumination.

- Incorporate consideration of the environmental, safety, and health effects of light pollution into EPA research programs.
- Expand discussion of well-designed (and thus energy-efficient) outdoor lighting in Energy Star publications and standards.
- Support education about light pollution in the agency's education, outreach, and grant programs.

We look forward to hearing from you to explain EPA's current position on light pollution and the steps you are taking to combat it.

Sincerely,



John Culberson
Member of Congress



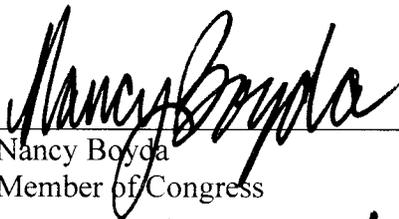
Gabrielle Giffords
Member of Congress



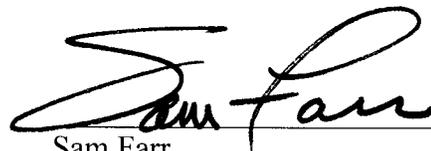
Steve Israel
Member of Congress



Todd Akin
Member of Congress



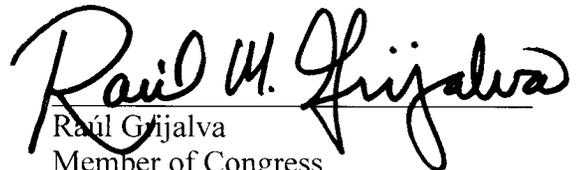
Nancy Boyda
Member of Congress



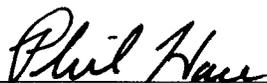
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