

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 8, 2014

Janet Napolitano
President
University of California
1111 Franklin Street
Oakland, CA 94607-5200

Dear President Napolitano:

Thank you very much for your letter of March 4, 2014, concerning Lick Observatory. Unfortunately we are concerned that your information is not entirely accurate and that perhaps you don't fully appreciate the importance of Lick, or of the University of California's ongoing support for the observatory, to our constituents and California.

Perhaps the most important reason to maintain UC's modest investment in Lick is to uphold commitments made, and assure future confidence. The federal government has invested millions of dollars in research grants and equipment construction at Lick. According to The University of California Observatories (UCO), there are approximately \$11.5 million in ongoing federal projects that would be disrupted if Lick were to close. Another \$10.4 million dollars in past federal infrastructure investment, would be wasted if Lick closes. The threat of closure or uncertain support and maintenance will put those investments in jeopardy and certainly chill any future projects. An even more worrisome consequence of UC's proposal to cut support would be if granting agencies perceive this action to raise doubts about the future ability and commitment of the University as a whole to maintain its research investments.

Our communications with Dr. Sandra Faber, the Interim Director of the UCO, which operates Lick and Dr. Alex Filippenko, a UC Berkeley astronomer working at Lick, provide a different perspective from your letter. Unlike your description of an unimportant facility with declining use and privately held instruments, Lick in fact gets very similar usage to the Keck Observatory, with scientists from all eight UC campuses with astronomy programs (and two UC-operated National Labs), and that number has been steady for years. Lick is used by undergraduate and graduate students, and post-doctoral, staff and faculty scientists for educational and cutting-edge research purposes.

The KAIT and APF facilities are owned by Lick and are used by astronomers from across UC. These cutting edge tools are an integral part of the observatory and could not function effectively as stand-alone entities. The Shane 120-inch telescope and Nickel 40-inch telescope, not mentioned in your letter, are even more widely and heavily used. The laser guide star adaptive optics, developed at Lick and still being studied and improved on Shane, allow ground-based observation comparable to the space-based Hubble Telescope.

While we support the UC astronomy facilities in Hawaii, the Keck Observatory and the Thirty-Meter Telescope, it would be foolhardy to sacrifice Lick with the expectation that they will take

up the slack. By providing more available nights at a lower cost and closer location, Lick works exceptionally well in concert with Keck (and will with the TMT). It provides a testing ground for new techniques and equipment. It also provides the number of telescope nights necessary for long-term projects, and it serves as a critical training and educational tool.

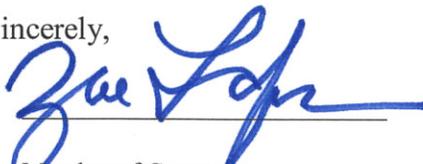
We appreciate the budgetary concerns facing UC, and it appears Lick is making great efforts to find other collaborators and supporters, but finding outside support will be almost impossible without the stability and confidence that a commitment from UC brings. The \$1.4 million UC invests in Lick's annual operations is a wise and valuable investment. This amount is small compared to investments in Keck or TMT, and in comparison to the cost of decommissioning the facility. While the exact cost of closing Lick can't be known without considerable study, we strongly encourage you to consult with Santa Clara County, which has land use jurisdiction in the Mt. Hamilton area, about the millions of dollars in potential costs as a result of closing Lick. Hazard reduction, ongoing fire suppression, and ecological habitat restoration costs alone could be very costly.

Support for Lick to continue certainly exists. UC's announcement to cease funding is attracting attention, and concerned citizens are rallying to express support. The Lick Observatory Council, composed of distinguished citizens primarily from the Bay Area, is considering novel strategies to help Lick. Your office has received many testimonial letters from faculty, researchers, graduate students, and undergraduates who have used Lick, as well as from citizens who appreciate Lick's major public visitor and educational outreach programs. This community support is crucial and demonstrates the appreciation for this historic scientific facility, and the goodwill it delivers. However, it is based on an understanding of UC's commitment to provide a base-level of support and keep the observatory operating and thriving.

Exciting possibilities for the future of Lick are being discussed: educational partnerships, astro-tourism, or possible commercial ventures; any or all of these could co-exist on the mountain along with astronomy research and with both graduate and undergraduate astronomy education programs, to the mutual benefit of all.

We celebrate UC's tremendous achievements in the science of astronomy and the vital contributions that Lick Observatory continues to make as a system-wide facility to UC's astronomy research and education programs. We hope to see Lick continue to provide these benefits to UC, the State and the community and we hope you will work with UCO Interim Director Faber to find a satisfactory solution. The elements for a solution, and the collaborative support it would need, exists to forge new avenues of opportunity for Lick to continue serving and benefiting students, the University, the scientific community, and the people of California.

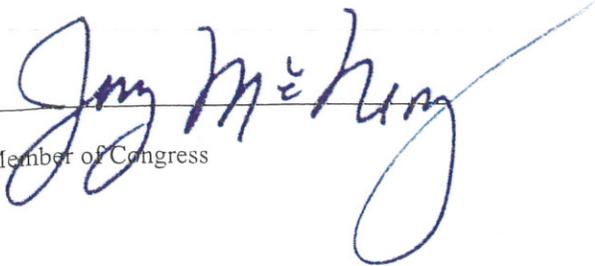
Sincerely,

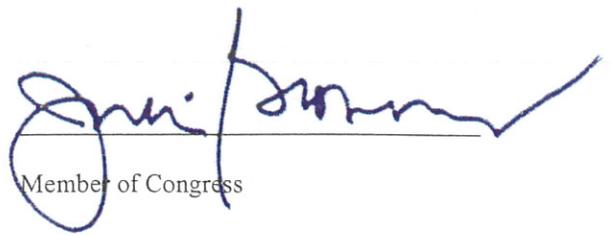


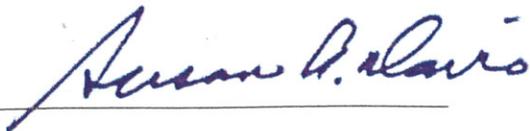
Member of Congress



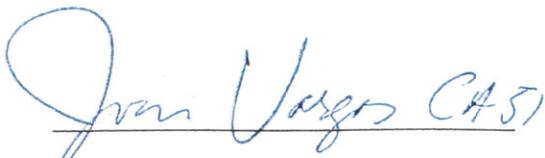
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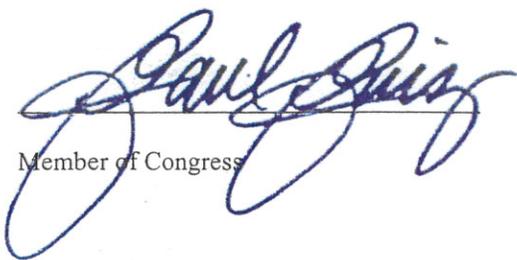

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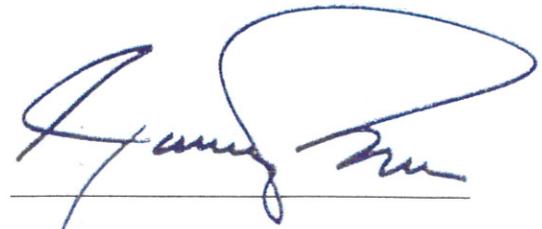

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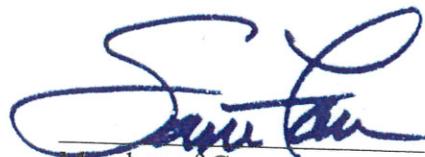

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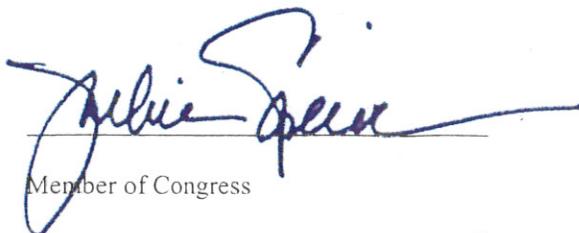

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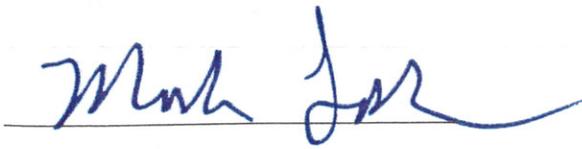

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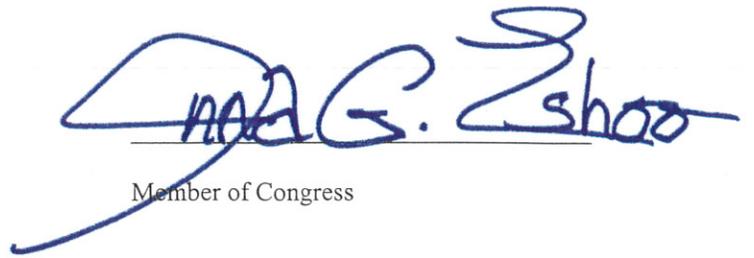

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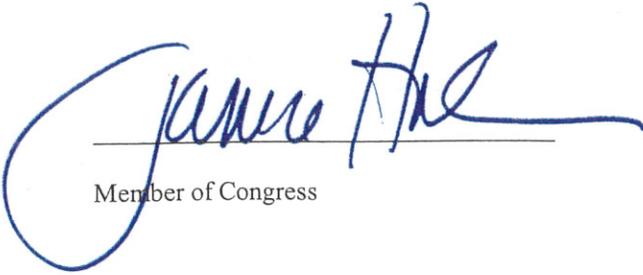

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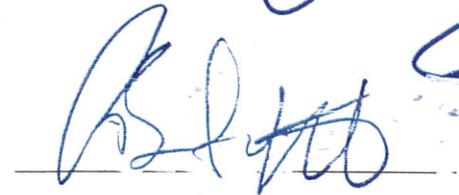
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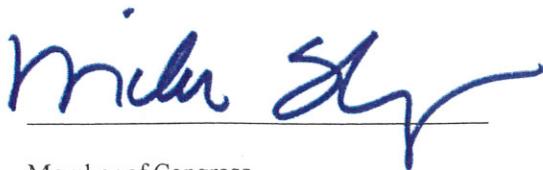
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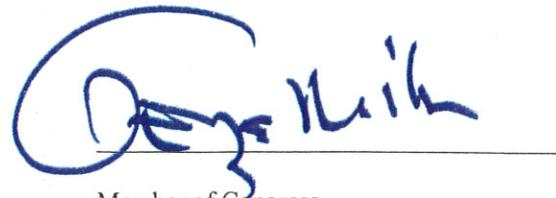
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Alpine Waters

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Juan Vargas (CA-51)
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