

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 9, 2018

Dr. Wess Mitchell
Assistant Secretary of State
The Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Assistant Secretary Mitchell:

We write to you as supporters of the Hungarian people. The citizens of Hungary, through many decades, have worked hard to advance democracy in their country, including through a free market and a strong civil society. Hungary's participation in NATO and the European Union – both built to protect shared values – should be a demonstration of its commitment to democracy and its tenets, to include freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

We are deeply concerned about the increasingly diminished space for independent journalism in Hungary. As the 2017 State Department Human Rights Report states, "A massive consolidation in the media market that started in 2015 continued during the year, resulting in further expansion of government-friendly enterprises and reduction in other media voices in radio, print, and online media, especially outside of Budapest." Other reports include the use of government funds to support friendly outlets, the publication of a list of journalists who are considered "threats" to the Hungarian government, and its promotion of stories from Russian government mouthpieces, such as, Russia Today and Sputnik.

We are not alone in our concerns. As you know, the European Union Parliament recently voted, by a significant majority, to trigger Article 7 against Hungary and open the door to sanctions. While we appreciate the Department's past efforts to engage the Hungarian government on this issue – more needs to be done.

As you know, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor programmed \$700,000 in FY2017 to promote independent media in Hungary. This fund was a critical step to combat the outlined negative trends. We, however, are troubled that this program has been canceled. Given the troubling trend in Hungary, we are requesting information on why this fund was canceled.

Supporting an independent media in Hungary should be a priority. A briefing from you to discuss this issue is key. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,


MARCY KAPTUR
Member of Congress

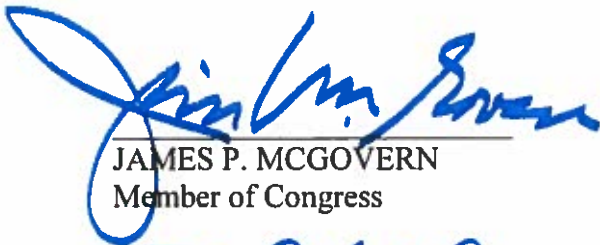

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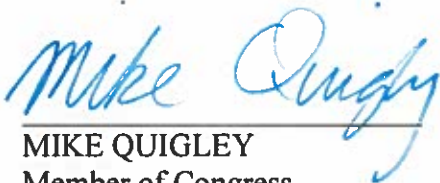
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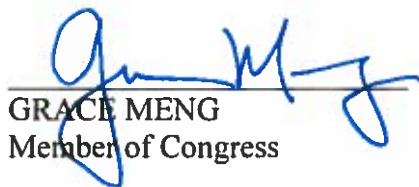
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