

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 28, 2006

The Honorable Elias Antonio Saca
President of El Salvador
Casa Presidencial
San Salvador, El Salvador

Dear President Saca:

We are writing to express our deep concern for the future of the Universidad Monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero (Oscar Romero University) in Chalatenango, the only rural university serving the poor of northern El Salvador.

Founded in 1993, the University aims to fulfill the spirit of the United Nations-brokered peace accords: to forward peace, to renew the economy, and to create the necessary conditions to improve the quality of life of the population, especially those living in extreme poverty. The Oscar Romero University serves over 900 students from impoverished families and has graduated 360 professionals who now contribute to the economy of their nation and their local communities.

Drs. Francisco and Barbara Acosta, both U.S. citizens and founding trustees, have brought to our attention an impending crisis at the University. An October 12th article in *La Prensa Gráfica* reported allegations of corruption on the part of a small group of University administrators. The Acostas together with Bishop Eduardo Alas of Chalatenango, who is also a founding trustee, report that on November 20th they filed charges against their fellow board members for misappropriation of funds and fraudulent administration, among other offenses. The Ministry of Education has apparently also initiated its own investigation into administrative anomalies and had indicated that it may implement sanctions, including possible closure of the University.

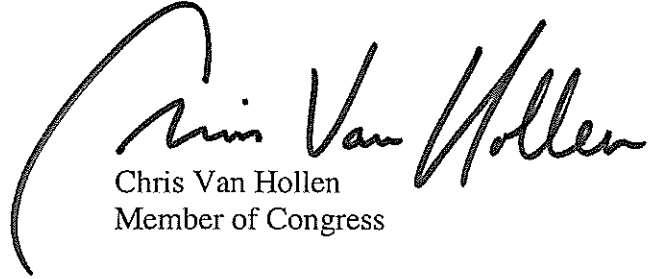
We are requesting your assistance and principled leadership in helping to resolve this problem while assuring the future viability of the Oscar Romero University. We urge you to work with the Attorney General of El Salvador to prosecute any wrongdoing against the University. We also request your intervention with the Ministry of Education to keep the University open while measures are taken to address the problem. The education and futures of over 900 students should not suffer because of the crimes of a handful of individuals. In this spirit, once the Board members found guilty of wrongdoing are replaced, we encourage you to include the Oscar Romero University in the plan for the Millennium Challenge Fund you will soon be signing in Washington, D.C. in order to help expand educational opportunities in northern El Salvador.

Given the University's growing international recognition of its positive impact in the poorest areas of northern El Salvador, your leadership in helping to preserve and strengthen this important institution will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress

JPM:cmb

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