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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 5, 2011

The Honorable Pedro Passos Coelho  
Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic  
Rua da Imprensa à Estrela, 4 - 1200-888  
Lisboa, Portugal

Dear Prime Minister Passos Coelho:

I write to express my concern about the recent decision by a Portuguese judge to deny a United States extradition request for George Wright, a convicted murderer who escaped from a United States prison in 1970.

As a United States Senator for the state of New Jersey, I represent the family of Walter Patterson, a resident of New Jersey, decorated World War II veteran, and father of two daughters. In November 1962, Mr. Patterson was murdered while working at the gas station he owned in New Jersey. George Wright, a United States citizen, was subsequently arrested and convicted of Mr. Patterson's murder. After serving only seven years of his 15 to 30 year sentence, Mr. Wright escaped from a New Jersey prison and later hijacked an airplane carrying 86 passengers, which eventually landed in Algeria. Mr. Wright later moved to and settled in Portugal.

In September 2011, Portuguese authorities arrested Mr. Wright, and the United States Department of Justice is currently seeking extradition so that he may serve the remainder of his murder sentence. On November 17, 2011, a Portuguese judge denied the request of the United States for extradition, and the United States Department of Justice has appealed that decision.

The United States and Portugal signed a bilateral extradition treaty in May 1908, which was updated in June 2009 with the signing of a protocol agreement to reflect the provisions of the 2003 Extradition Agreement between the United States and the European Union. Notably, under the 1908 bilateral treaty and the United States-European Union extradition treaty, Portugal has committed to returning individuals who have committed qualifying offenses, including murder, to the United States for punishment after their conviction for such a crime.

George Wright is guilty of the murder of Walter Patterson and has yet to serve out his full sentence for that heinous crime in the United States. I hope you will agree that Mr. Patterson's family deserves to see justice for his murder. As such, I respectfully request any assistance and support you can provide in ensuring the extradition request by the United States for Mr. Wright is granted.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,



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