

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

August 4, 2016

President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

We write to respectfully request that you invite the 2016 U.S. International Mathematical Olympiad Team to the White House, in honor and celebration of their first place victory at the 57th International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) in July. The team of six high schoolers—Ankan Bhattacharya, Allen Liu, Junyao Peng, Ashwin Sah, and Yuan Yao, and Michael Kural, a Connecticut constituent of ours—defeated teams from more than 100 countries and defied America’s poor international ranking in mathematics. Led by their coach Dr. Po-Shen Loh and deputy coach Razvan Gelca, this was the second consecutive win in as many years for the United States team. Prior to last year’s win, the team had not won the competition since 1994, a feat that, last year, drew comparisons to the U.S. Olympic ice hockey win against the Soviet Union in 1980, often referred to as the “Miracle on Ice.” This team of competitors deserves significant recognition.

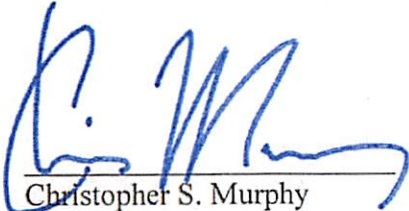
The IMO began with seven founding Warsaw Pact countries in 1959, and has since expanded to become a truly global event. Several former members of Team USA have gone on to win major research prizes, such as Breakthrough or Nevanlinna, while others have become top level executives at leading financial institutions and technology startups. Eric Lander, leader of the Human Genome Project and Co-chair of your Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, was a former member of Team USA, as well as Noam Elkies, who became the youngest tenured professor in Harvard’s history. Through the ongoing work of the Mathematical Association of America, which runs numerous competitions and events to select IMO team members, a new generation of mathematical thinkers and innovators is already being developed.

This year’s competition included problems in a range of challenging mathematical topics and often fused different subject matter together in creative ways. We believe that the tradition of bringing championship-winning teams to the White House to celebrate their achievement should include academic teams as well. Winning a prestigious international competition, whether in athletics or in academics, requires discipline, teamwork, dedication, and competitiveness, and the hard work required to achieve at such a level should be recognized.


While we feel the team deserves to visit the White House based on the merits of their win alone, we believe a visit would amplify the White House’s existing efforts to promote STEM education. The Administration’s laudable focus on STEM education helped raised \$700 million in public-private partnerships to fund areas of critical need such as training STEM teachers and increasing diversity in STEM fields.

The entire country should be proud of the way these young men represented the United States on an international stage; we believe honoring them at the White House would appropriately recognize them and send a message about the value of academic achievement. Thank you very much for your consideration.


Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Jim Himes
Member of Congress