WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47), Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam and member of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, has joined a bipartisan coalition of House members and signed onto a letter calling on the President of Vietnam, Nguyen Minh Triet, to ensure that one of Vietnam's most prominent dissidents, Father Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly, remains free following the end of his one-term suspension of his prison sentence on March 15, 2011.

A Catholic priest, Father Ly has served as an enduring symbol of political oppression around the world. He was wrongfully sentenced to eight years in jail for exercising his rights to freedom of religion, expression, and association. Father Ly was given a one-year suspension of his prison sentence after suffering two strokes while in solitary confinement. Out of consideration for internationally recognized human rights, and Father Ly's declining health, Congresswoman Sanchez believes the Government of Vietnam should prevent the possible re-detention of Father Ly.

"I call on President Triet to authorize the unconditional release of Father Ly," said Congresswoman Sanchez. "Father Ly and many other courageous Vietnamese dissidents have been harassed and persecuted for far too long. The United States and international community must address Vietnam's human rights violations and more importantly urge the Government of Vietnam to increase political freedom and improve its legal system."