

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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April 22, 2015

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sander Levin
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Ryan and Ranking Member Levin:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations, and dedicated to promoting, protecting, and defending America's free enterprise system, strongly urges you to support H.R. 1890, the "Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015," which would renew Trade Promotion Authority (TPA).

This legislation is vital because economic growth and job creation at home depend on our ability to sell American goods and services to the 95% of the world's customers living outside our country. Many Americans are already seizing these opportunities in our states and communities: One in four manufacturing jobs depends on exports, and one in three acres on American farms is planted for consumers overseas. 98% of the 300,000 U.S. companies that export their products are small- and medium-size businesses.

Unfortunately, the international playing field is often unfairly tilted against American workers and companies. While our market is generally open, U.S. exports face foreign tariffs that often soar into double digits as well as a thicket of non-tariff barriers. Trade agreements are negotiated to tear down these barriers. By creating a level playing field, trade pacts help U.S. manufacturers, service providers, workers, farmers, and ranchers to compete in overseas markets.

The record of America's trade agreements is outstanding. While our 20 trade agreement partners represent just 6% of the world's population, they buy nearly half of U.S. exports. U.S. trade agreement partners purchase 12.8 times more U.S. exports per capita than other countries. These agreements have generated an expansion in trade that supports more than 5 million American jobs, according to a U.S. Chamber study.

To expand on these benefits, the United States is negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement with 11 other Asia-Pacific nations, including some of the world's fastest growing economies. The United States is also negotiating the Transatlantic Trade and Investment

Partnership with the European Union, the largest market for U.S. business, as well as the Trade in Services Agreement with more than 50 countries.

However, to make any of these growth-driving trade agreements a reality, Congress must first renew TPA. This bill would allow Congress to set priorities for U.S. trade negotiations and hold the administration accountable through extensive ongoing consultations during trade talks. TPA also ensures Congress has the final say on any agreement in the form of an up-or-down vote. A simple form of TPA was first enacted in 1934, but the latest version lapsed in 2007.

In addition, the Chamber strongly supports the AGOA Extension and Enhancement Act of 2015, which would renew both the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and provide continued trade benefits for Haiti. The Chamber also urges Congress to approve customs reauthorization legislation, which is long overdue. The Chamber further recognizes that many members of Congress consider renewal of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) legislation an important part of the political bargain involved in securing approval of TPA, and we urge members to support it.

In conclusion, this TPA bill reflects many of the best ideas in contemporary trade policy. Negotiating objectives have been modernized to reflect our changing economy, with new provisions on such issues as digital trade and state-owned enterprises. There is nothing “fast” about the manner in which this bill was prepared, and it plainly reflects input from many quarters.

Given the careful balance attained in many areas, the Chamber urges members of Congress to forgo amendments and support this bill, which squarely reflects the U.S. national interest. The Chamber urges you to support the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 to help ensure high-standard outcomes in trade agreements that support U.S. growth and jobs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruce Josten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

R. Bruce Josten

cc: Members of the Committee on Ways and Means