

Reps. Mike Thompson, Earl Blumenauer Call on Obama Administration to Work with Congress on Fair TPA Legislation that Creates Jobs and Grows U.S. Economy

Washington, DC – U.S. Reps. Mike Thompson (CA-05) and Earl Blumenauer (OR-03), two senior Members of the House Committee on Ways & Means, led a letter to President Obama urging him to work collaboratively with Congress to craft Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) legislation. Strong TPA legislation that enhances the consultative role of Congress throughout the course of trade negotiations will help increase our nation’s international competitiveness, grow the U.S. economy and create good American jobs.

“Increasing exports and eliminating trade barriers can be a win for our economy provided the playing field is level and everyone operates under a fair and basic set of rules, **said Thompson**. “Any Trade Promotion Authority must support and help create good American jobs, grow the U.S. economy, set basic standards for our partners to live up to, improve market access, protect the environment, and allows for Congressional oversight. By meeting these basic benchmarks, the Administration can work with Congress on meaningful trade policy.”

“This letter lays out a clear path of how the administration can work with Congress to craft a thoughtful approach to TPA,” said **Blumenauer**. “Democratic members of the House Ways & Means Committee who have signed this letter are inclined to be supportive. We believe, however, that TPA must reflect a trade policy that not only creates and strengthens jobs here in the U.S. while improving market access, but also promotes high-quality standards abroad that prevent a race to the bottom. Meeting that benchmark will be critical to our continued support.”

The letter presents the ways in which a properly structured TPA can build on the progress Congress has made to transform American trade policy into more than just a means to eliminate trade barriers. It can also be an integral tool for improving the working conditions and environmental protections among our trading partners through enforceable, meaningful standards. In addition, the letter states that TPA should include incentives to help keep well-paying jobs at home; contain a reauthorization of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs; and adequately fund our trade enforcement agencies so that we ensure other countries adhere to their commitments and provide fair market access.

The full text of the letter is below.

November 8, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We support your stated goal of promoting American exports and eliminating barriers to trade. We are optimistic that such efforts, done correctly, will grow our economy and lead to more well-paying U.S. jobs by expanding access to U.S. goods and services abroad and leveling the playing field for American companies and workers.

To pursue this goal, we understand that your Administration plans to work with Congress to craft new legislation reauthorizing Trade Promotion Authority (TPA). To gain the broadest possible support for TPA in Congress, this proposal cannot just be an extension of earlier trade promotion authorities. Any new proposed TPA must reflect the changing nature of international trade and ensure that Congress plays a more meaningful role in the negotiating process than in the 2002 TPA, which did not receive large bipartisan support in the House of Representatives.

Moreover, we believe that any proposed negotiating authority should help our country and its workers better compete in the modern global economy. A new TPA should include incentives to help keep well-paying jobs at home, and to help spur new American innovation and job creation across all sectors of our economy. A new TPA should also include a reauthorization of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs to help retrain workers impacted by changing global trade and by the implementation of trade agreements. Finally, any new TPA should strengthen our trade laws and adequately fund our trade enforcement agencies so that we can hold other countries accountable and ensure they adhere to their commitments and provide fair market access.

We note that a well crafted TPA can help build on the progress Congress has made to transform American trade policy into more than just a means to eliminating trade barriers, but as a tool for improving the working conditions and environmental protections among our trading partners through enforceable, meaningful standards. For example, the May 10th Agreement, which incorporated significant improvements in labor and environmental commitments into previous agreements, should serve as a baseline for future agreements.

We believe that TPA must reflect a trade policy that not only creates and strengthens jobs here in the U.S. and improves market access, but also promotes high-quality standards abroad that prevent a race to the bottom.

Thank you for your attention to this letter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

MIKE THOMPSON

Member of Congress

EARL BLUMENAUER

Member of Congress

CHARLES B. RANGEL

Member of Congress

JIM McDERMOTT

Member of Congress

JOHN LEWIS

Member of Congress

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