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October 30, 2013

The Honorable Michael Froman
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Froman:

We write to express our concerns regarding the persistent lack of transparency and congressional input in the negotiation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Last year, we signed a letter with over 120 of our colleagues urging then-U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk to seek broader and deeper consultation with Congress on the substance of the TPP. As our letter stated, such consultation is essential because the unprecedented twelve-country FTA involves policy matters within the jurisdiction of nearly every congressional committee, including those related to intellectual property, labor, human rights, agriculture, natural resources, the environment, government procurement, financial services, healthcare, telecommunications, energy, and others. Additionally, since the Obama Administration has indicated that the TPP will serve as a model for future trade agreements, the precedent it establishes for congressional consultation and review will have broad and lasting implications for U.S. trade policy.

Unfortunately, nearly 16 months later, the level of congressional consultation and input remains alarmingly low, despite reports that the TPP negotiations are entering their final stages. Many of our constituents continue to raise concerns about the agreement's supposed content, but in the absence of greater engagement on the part of your office, we cannot adequately address these concerns.

As the representatives of districts that are highly integrated in the global economy, we have always believed that free trade agreements, when crafted responsibly and with adequate protections for American workers and the environment, can generate economic growth and shared prosperity for our nation. We also understand the importance of protecting FTAs from

excessive modification by Congress and the role that Trade Promotion Authority, or “fast track,” has played in achieving this goal.

Until Congress is provided greater opportunity to weigh in on the substance of the agreement, however, the Administration should not take for granted the renewal of fast track authority. Moreover, there is growing bipartisan agreement that Twentieth Century Trade Promotion Authority or “fast track” itself is no longer adequate for the consideration of complex modern trade agreements like the TPP and should be replaced with a process that allows for greater congressional and public input.

As the TPP negotiations move forward, it is imperative that you consult with Congress in a more substantive and sustained manner to ensure the views of all stakeholders are taken into consideration. Further, we encourage your office to work closely with Congress to pursue a more transparent and inclusive legislative mechanism for the consideration of the TPP and future trade agreements. Only through such a framework can we truly realize the benefits of free trade for American families and the U.S. economy as a whole.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



DAVID PRICE
Member of Congress



JIM McDERMOTT
Member of Congress