

Democratic Ways and Means Committee Members Letter to USTR Kirk on TPP
Negotiating Objectives

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Kirk
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20208

Via Facsimile: (202) 395-4549

Re: Negotiating Objectives for the Trans Pacific Partnership

Dear Ambassador Kirk:

As strong supporters of increasing exports, we commend your efforts to open foreign markets to American goods and create new economic opportunities for American companies and workers. We were very pleased when President Obama discussed the need to improve American trade policy during his campaign. We join him in our strong and abiding belief that our trade pacts will create larger, broader benefits for American families and avoid shortcomings of past pacts if we improve aspects of the past trade agreement model.

While we oppose isolationism and protectionism, many of us have had to vote against specific trade pacts in the past because their texts included elements that undermined our core goals of job creation, environmental protection, and food and product safety. As you prepare for next week's round of negotiations for the proposed Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement, we encourage you to seize this opportunity to advance a bipartisan fair trade model that works for working families.

Since the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), the American public has become increasingly skeptical of trade agreements. Too many working families view these agreements as vehicles to promote the off-shoring of jobs. Too many believe these pacts create a rigged system that actually encourages American-based companies to move production off-shore to avoid having to pay decent wages, keep workplaces safe, or protect the environment.

The creation of a trade policy that works for working families should be the central goal of the TPP negotiations. The TPP should therefore build on the improvements to the Peru Free Trade Agreement that Democrats negotiated with the Bush Administration in 2007.

We believe that a different approach to trade agreements would help future pacts gain broad public and congressional support. That is why we urge you to consider new language for the TPP that promotes robust, attainable standards on topics including labor rights, environmental protection, investor-state dispute settlement, import safety, and government procurement.

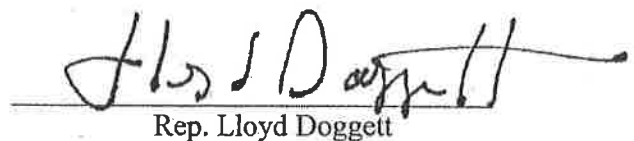
Toward that end, we encourage you to review the array of trade-related legislation Democrats have introduced during this session of Congress.

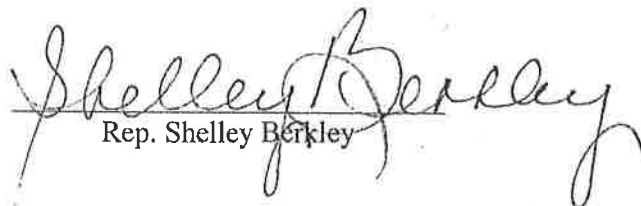
While no one proposal would provide a perfect fix to the deficiencies of existing trade pacts, Members of Congress, too often left out of trade policy discussions by previous Administrations, have advanced many ideas worth examining. We believe some of the provisions of our existing trade agreements could be improved to better protect working families here and abroad; safeguard the right of federal and state governments to promote the welfare of their citizenry; ensure import safety; and promote environmental conservation.

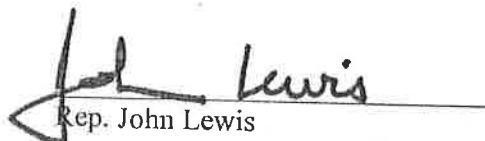
We appreciate your willingness to consider a new approach to the first trade agreement that President Obama can truly call his own. By addressing the shortcomings of existing trade pacts we can promote workers' rights, encourage environmental protection, and prevent a chilling effect on regulatory efforts across a host of issue areas. Executing new agreements with these principles in mind will take an important step toward creating a new, fair trade model. We pledge our continued support in these efforts and stand ready to assist you in building support, both inside and outside Congress, for a TPP that embraces a new approach to fair trade:

Sincerely,


Rep. Linda T. Sánchez


Rep. Lloyd Doggett


Rep. Shelley Berkley


Rep. John Lewis