November 12, 2013

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

Dear President Obama:

We are strong supporters of American trade expansion. We are also strong supporters of the U.S. Constitution. Article I-8 of the Constitution gives Congress exclusive authority to set the terms of trade. Meanwhile, the executive branch has constitutional authority to negotiate with foreign sovereigns on behalf of our nation. The Founders established this clear check and balance to prevent the president from unilaterally negotiating with foreign nations and imposing trade policies that Congress would deem to be against the national interest.

For two hundred years of our nation’s history, Congress led our nation’s trade policy. However, recent presidents have seized Congress’ constitutional trade authority and also “diplomatically legislated” on numerous other matters under Congress’ jurisdiction using a procedure commonly known as “Fast Track”, or “Trade Promotion Authority.”

Under Fast Track, the executive branch is empowered to sign trade agreements before Congress has an opportunity to vote on them, and then unilaterally write legislation making the pacts’ terms U.S. federal law. Fast Track allows the president to send these executive branch-authored bills directly to the floor for a vote under rules forbidding all floor amendments and limiting debate. And by requiring the House to vote on the bill within a preset period of time, it takes the floor schedule out of the hands of the House majority and gives it to the president.

Given these factors, we do not agree to cede our constitutional authority to the executive through an approval of a request for “Fast Track Trade Promotion Authority.”

Sincerely,

Walter B. Jones (NC-03)
Member of Congress

Michele Bachmann (MN-06)
Member of Congress
Dana Rohrabacher (CA-48)
Member of Congress

Paul Cook (CA-08)
Member of Congress

John J. Duncan, Jr. (TN-02)
Member of Congress

Frank A. LoBiondo (NJ-02)
Member of Congress

Chris Collins (NY-27)
Member of Congress

John L. Mica (FL-07)
Member of Congress

Louie Gohmert (TX-01)
Member of Congress

David B. McKinley (WV-01)
Member of Congress

Steve Stockman (TX-36)
Member of Congress

Rob Bishop (UT-01)
Member of Congress

Christopher H. Smith (NJ-04)
Member of Congress

Kerry L. Bentivolio (MI-11)
Member of Congress
Paul C. Broun (GA-10)
Member of Congress

Don Young (AK-At Large)
Member of Congress

Frank R. Wolf (VA-10)
Member of Congress

Michael G. Fitzpatrick (PA-08)
Member of Congress

Tim Murphy (PA-18)
Member of Congress

Mo Brooks (AL-05)
Member of Congress

Jeff Duncan (SC-03)
Member of Congress

Jeff Denham (CA-10)
Member of Congress

Duncan Hunter (CA-50)
Member of Congress