

TEAMSTERS NEWS

International Brotherhood

25 Louisiana Avenue, NW • Washington, DC 20001 • www.teamster.org



of Teamsters

202-624-6911 • fax: 202-624-6918

For Immediate Release
Dec. 4, 2012

Contact:
Galen Munroe (202) 624-6911
Gmunroe@teamster.org

TEAMSTERS LEAD TPP FIGHT, GAIN BACKING FOR SENATE LETTER ON TRADE TALKS

24 Senators Sign Letter Supporting Labor Rights, Opposing Outsourcing in TPP

(WASHINGTON) –The International Brotherhood of Teamsters led a coalition of fair trade advocates in helping to gain support for a bipartisan letter from Sen. Al Franken and 23 of his colleagues to President Obama about trade policy. The letter, released yesterday, expresses support for negotiating strengthened labor rights and protections against outsourcing in the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

“We need to get our trade policy right so that it keeps good jobs in America and increases our exports,” said Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is a multilateral trade agreement among countries that border the Pacific Ocean: Australia, Chile, Peru, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, New Zealand, the United States and Vietnam. The 15th round of negotiations are being held in Auckland, New Zealand, from Dec. 3-12.

“It should be crafted to maximize good job creation and market expansion while minimizing the incentives for further off-shoring of middle class jobs,” the letter said.

The letter urged that the deal:

- Maintains “Buy American” requirements;
- Requires workers’ rights to be protected and enforced;
- Includes safeguards against incentives for offshoring jobs and currency manipulation;
- Sets out strong rules of origin for TPP members;
- Ensures that state-owned and state-supported enterprises operate on a level playing field.

(MORE)

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Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa submitted comments to the U.S. Trade Representative last month outlining the criteria needed for the Teamsters to support the TPP.

The Teamsters are sending a representative to the New Zealand talks to present the letter along with a strong message that Teamsters in Canada and the U.S. will not support a trade deal that doesn't protect collective bargaining rights.

The 24 Senators who signed the bill are: Al Franken, D-Minn.; Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio; Tom Harkin, D-Iowa; Barbara Boxer, D-Calif.; Ron Wyden, D-Ore.; Jeff Merkley, D-Ore.; Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y.; Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I.; Richard Blumenthal, D-Ct.; Bob Casey, D-Pa.; Joe Manchin, D-W.V.; Barbara Mikulski, D-Md.; Tom Udall, D-N.M.; Jon Tester, D-Mont.; Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich.; Patrick Leahy, D-Vt.; Bernie Sanders, D-Vt.; Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.; Jay Rockefeller, D-W.V.; Chris Coons, D-Del.; Olympia Snowe, D-Me.; Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J.; Jack Reed, D-Mich.; Bill Nelson, D-Fla.

Founded in 1903, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters represents 1.4 million hardworking men and women throughout the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. Visit www.teamster.org for more information. Follow us on Twitter @Teamsters and "like" us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/teamsters.

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 30, 2012

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As the economy continues to recover, a major priority of the American people and of your Administration has been preventing the outsourcing of good American jobs. In the context of trade policy, we believe, like you, that trade when done right should create and preserve good American jobs instead of outsourcing them. As your Administration has stated, a balanced trade agenda means opening markets for U.S. exporters and keeping faith with workers here at home.

Pursuing such a balanced trade agenda requires that your Administration and Congress work together. Nowhere is such cooperation on trade more urgent than in the ongoing negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a vast, multi-country free trade agreement that will have a significant effect on global trade and investment. It should be crafted to maximize good job creation and market expansion while minimizing the incentives for further off-shoring of middle class jobs.


With that objective in mind, as you and your United States Trade Representative continue negotiations on a TPP, we respectfully urge you to:

- Maintain “Buy American” government procurement requirements. The American people, through their elected officials, should not be prohibited from establishing government procurement policies that prioritize job creation in the United States. We hope that you will direct USTR negotiators to ensure that any TPP not restrict “Buy American” and “Buy Local” government procurement policies at the federal or sub-federal level.
- Require strong Rules of Origin. The Rules of Origin in the TPP should ensure that only signatories to the TPP will benefit from its increased market access and other provisions so that employment opportunities in the U.S. may be expanded. Non-TPP members must not be allowed to use weak rules of origin as a backdoor way to enter the U.S. market and further depress U.S. job prospects.
- Ensure that State-Owned and State-Supported Commercial Enterprises (SOEs) operate on a level playing field. Given that SOEs are more common in the other TPP countries than in the U.S., the TPP should require that SOEs competing with private U.S. enterprises operate and make decisions on a commercial basis. The agreement should also incorporate a reporting requirement so that countries have to provide information on the operation of their SOEs in other TPP countries on a regular basis.

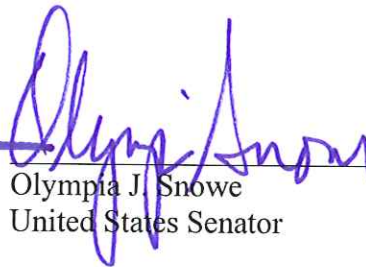
- Safeguard against investment and service sector rules that provide incentives for the offshoring of both good manufacturing and service sector jobs. These rules should not grant corporations extreme protections that help them relocate investment and jobs overseas.
- Include an enforceable obligation to protect fundamental labor rights. A country that denies these rights to workers is providing a hidden subsidy that keeps wages artificially lower than they otherwise would be if workers were free to organize and bargain—a subsidy that makes U.S.-based producers less cost-competitive. The free exercise of fundamental labor rights is key to improving the standards of living and expanding export markets while labor suppression merely ensures that middle classes—and export markets—will be smaller than they otherwise would be.
- Safeguard against currency manipulation. To prevent the artificial suppression of job-creating American exports, the TPP should explicitly allow countries to respond to and offset currency manipulation.

If your Administration pursues these basic negotiating objectives and collaborates with Congress during the negotiations—ahead of the ratification debate—we are confident that the TPP can become a tool for job creation that helps rebuild a national consensus on international trade policy. We look forward to working with you and the USTR to ensure that the TPP meets the crucial goals of opening markets to American exports and keeping faith with American workers. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any of us.

Sincerely,



Al Franken
United States Senator



Olympia J. Snowe
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Tom Harkin
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator




Ron Wyden
United States Senator



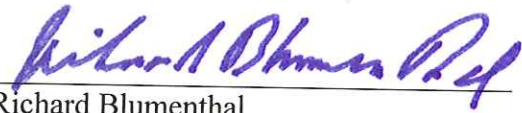
Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator



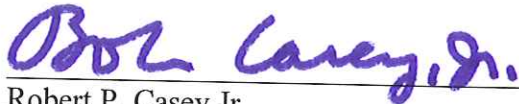
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



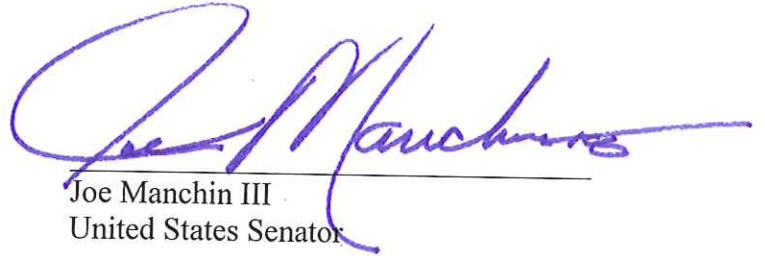
Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



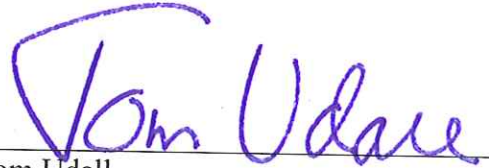
Robert P. Casey Jr.
United States Senator



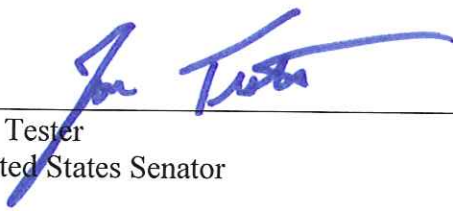
Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



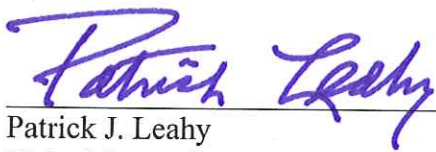
Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator




Tom Udall
United States Senator

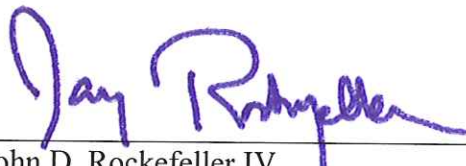

Jon Tester
United States Senator

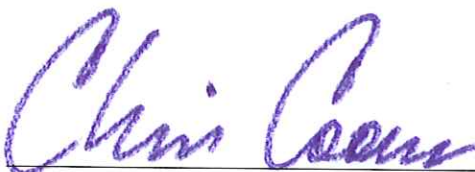

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

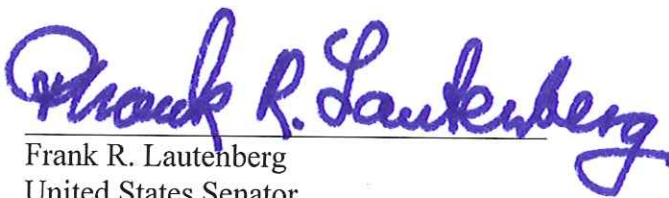

Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator


Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator


John D. Rockefeller IV
United States Senator


Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator


Frank R. Lautenberg
United States Senator


Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United State Senator