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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

GREGORY W. MEEKS
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CONSUMER CREDIT

November 13, 2013

Ambassador Michael Froman
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Froman:

U.S. companies account for a vast amount of the value added in the global supply chain that creates thousands of good paying jobs here in the United States. Therefore, it is imperative that a trade policy, and a negotiating strategy, which furthers this modern trade pattern would yield substantial benefits for the U.S. in the form of long term economic growth and job gains.

Trade in footwear represents one of the areas in which a new trade policy approach in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), designed to reflect the global value chain, could make a real difference for the United States. Even though less than 1 percent of the footwear sold in the U.S. is produced domestically, the vast majority of the value of imported footwear actually originates here. The innovation, design, marketing and sale of that footwear -- key and high-value functions in the global supply chain -- are all completed in the U.S., providing thousands of good-paying American jobs in every state.

Of the footwear imported into the United States, 8 percent comes from Vietnam, one of the countries with whom the U.S. is negotiating the TPP. Those imports are subject to some of the highest duties in the U.S. tariff schedule. Immediate, meaningful duty elimination and establishing straight-forward and uncomplicated rules of origin for footwear would allow U.S. brands to reinvest import duty and paperwork savings in innovation and maintain global competitiveness. Furthermore, these outdated tariffs result in an unfair burden on American working families; in effect serving as a "hidden" tax on our constituents that negatively impacts their purchasing power.

For U.S. companies, workers and consumers, the TPP will set the stage for future agreements, making it imperative that the United States get it right. A trade policy that creates an artificial advantage by choosing winners and losers in the marketplace disadvantages the global supply chain and American consumers. High duties and outdated tariffs are a disruptive burden on working families' economic strength. Therefore, we highly recommend completely eliminating high duties on imported U.S. footwear in the TPP so American companies can maintain its global competitiveness and U.S. consumers can benefit with new increased purchasing power.

Sincerely,

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Cedric Richmond
Member of Congress

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