

June 2, 2015

Representative J. Randy Forbes
United States House of Representatives
2135 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC
20515

Dear Rep. Forbes:

The American Farm Bureau Federation, the nation's largest general farm organization, urges your support for the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 (TPA), H.R. 1314. The negotiating objectives, consultation processes, transparency and voting procedures to effectively consider trade agreements make this a positive achievement in meeting our trade goals.

Over the past 40 years, TPA and its precedent versions have provided U.S. negotiators the ability to reach agreement with other nations on trade matters that are not open to change by Congress, yet TPA has protected Congress' constitutional role to set trade objectives and priorities and, importantly, reserve the final "yea" or "nay" on the resulting agreement.

Last year, in agriculture alone, America's farmers and ranchers exported over \$152 billion in food, fiber, feed and energy commodities and products to customers around the world and provided the United States a positive net trade of \$43 billion over imports. However, 2015 projections suggest U.S. agricultural exports will fall by \$9 billion.

While some of this decrease is the result of lower commodity prices for certain crops, it is also the result of the ongoing challenges U.S. negotiators face in reaching multi-lateral agreements and resolving trade conflicts with our international trading partners. Farm Bureau's farmers and ranchers urge you to extend this critical tool to our negotiating team.

The refrain from foreign governments is familiar -- why should they negotiate on the tough issues when the potential exists for Congress to change the details. TPA is the tool that leverages the strength of our system.

We believe TPA is particularly important to breaking the logjams in both the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations, which include nations that represent significant and important growth markets for U.S.

farmers and ranchers. USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) estimates that if the TPP agreement eliminated the remaining tariffs and Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs) among TPP partners, the value of U.S. agricultural exports to these countries would increase by 5 percent, or about \$2.8 billion. Regarding the TTIP agreement, ERS estimates that simply restoring U.S. market share for agricultural products in the EU to 2006 levels would increase U.S. agricultural exports by more than \$4.1 billion.

We believe your vote to support the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 reminds all Americans of the high value you place on a strong, stable economy that supports businesses, whether farms, ranches or other industry enterprises, and the jobs they provide. We want -- we need -- the U.S. government working to open markets, expand economic development worldwide and enforce a strong rules-based trading system.

Without the ability to finish negotiations and present those agreements to Congress for an up or down ratification vote, we are ceding potential market development and expansion to our competitors and yielding global economic leadership to other nations.

The Senate has passed the TPA bill. We urge you now to support passage of H.R. 1314. America's farmers and ranchers appreciate your vote and your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Bob Stallman
President
American Farm Bureau Federation