

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 15, 2014

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

We write to you today about the upcoming trade agenda. More specifically, we are writing to express deep concern about the prospect of renewing the Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) – better known as Fast Track – that lapsed in 2007. As the TPA that was enacted over a decade ago is inadequate for addressing the complex trade agreements of the 21st century, it is clear that renewal of TPA in a form that resembles that framework would be unacceptable. Instead, TPA must be replaced with a new trade agreement negotiation and approval process appropriate to 21st-century trade agreements and consistent with the constitutional role of Congress in trade.

As you know, the United States is currently negotiating two significant trade agreements, the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. Together, these two agreements would encompass more than 60 percent of the global economy and more than half of U.S. trade. Prior to the consideration of these agreements, there are a number of trade policy initiatives that will require Congressional attention, including consideration of TPA and reauthorizing the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. As these initiatives come up for consideration, potentially in a package, we believe it is imperative that we improve upon Congressional consultation, while also including provisions to maximize economic and job growth at home.

It has been more than ten years since Congress considered legislation granting Trade Promotion Authority. In that time, the global economy has changed, and with it our trade policy. The trade agreements currently being negotiated are complex economic agreements between large groups of nations encompassing a wide variety of issues ranging from state-owned enterprises to intellectual property. They have profound effects on our nation's economy and laws and the communities that we represent. As such, the terms of Congressional involvement require a number of reforms. Specifically, the last TPA framework created a Congressional Oversight Group (COG) that has proven ineffective at meaningfully increasing member involvement or understanding of our trade negotiations. We must do better. Any bill reestablishing an expedited legislative process for approving trade agreements must improve upon this consultation body, broaden the scope of members to include those beyond the committees of jurisdiction, improve access to negotiating information for Congress and the public, and institute strong mechanisms to certify that our negotiating objectives are achieved.

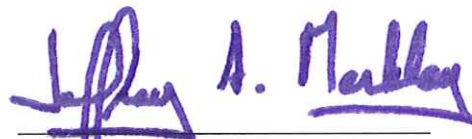
We are also concerned about any larger trade package of which such legislation spelling out a new approval process would be a part. While TAA can be an essential component of our trade policy, we need a broader effort to ensure American workers are competing on a fair and even playing field. A large trade package should also include provisions to promote our nation's competitiveness. For instance, for far too long our trade policies have hurt our domestic manufacturing sector instead of helping it. We must not allow our global competitors to continue challenging American leadership in manufacturing and innovation. We believe any package should include provisions to address currency manipulation, stronger mechanisms to address unfair labor practices, the ability of communities to preserve their values, strong trade enforcement policies and should provide innovative solutions to finance improvements to our crumbling infrastructure.

We look forward to working with you to achieve these goals. We understand that the Senate Finance Committee may soon take up legislation on the trade agreement approval process, and as non-Committee members, we believe that we must use this moment to advance a more comprehensive approach to trade policy that prepares workers and businesses to take advantage of new opportunities and promote domestic production and jobs. And we must not return to an outdated and inadequate legislative process for shaping and approving trade agreements. Thank you.

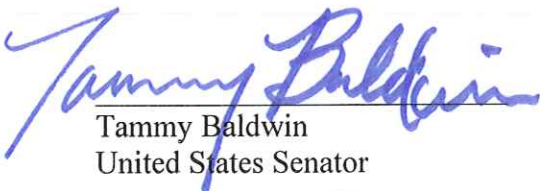
Sincerely,



Al Franken
United States Senator



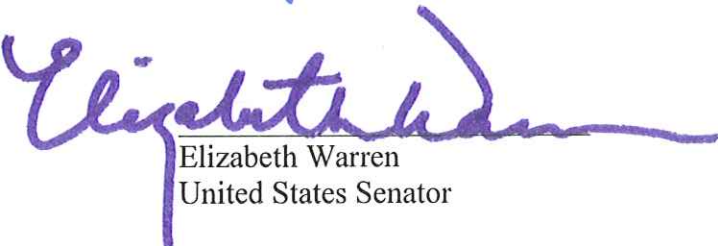
Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



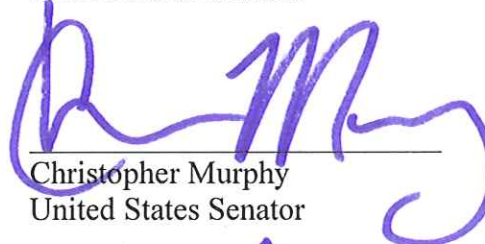
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Tom Harkin
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Christopher Murphy
United States Senator



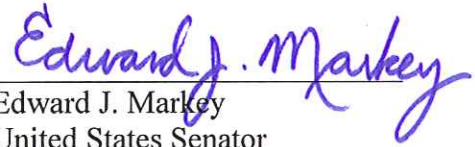
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Carl Levin
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator