May 30, 2018

The Honorable Robert E. Lighthizer
United States Trade Representative
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

We appreciate your commitment to addressing unfair trade practices by the Government of China, however we urge you to do everything possible to address these problems without closing markets, imposing tariffs, or enacting other government regulations that, might harm large numbers of U.S. workers, consumers, businesses, farmers, and ranchers.

It is clear that China's policies regarding intellectual property and forced technology transfers have been a source of grave concern for many years, and it is time for a strong response from the United States.

The challenge, of course, is how best to engage with China in order to secure desired changes in the policies. We do not believe that the current cycle of threatened tariffs between the United States and China will secure optimal results, and are concerned that there will be significant unintended adverse consequences to the United States. Indeed, even the mere threat of tariffs can diminish U.S. economic growth, competitiveness, and exports.

We appreciated your March 21st comments before the House Ways & Means Committee assuring that the Administration’s approach under Section 301 would be to “maximize the pain on China and minimize the pain on U.S. consumers.” However, we are already hearing from our constituents that they could be facing higher costs, reduced production, disruptions in supply chains and lost sales.

It has been widely reported that actual or potential increased tariffs are already causing pain for U.S. agricultural exports, including pork, soybeans, corn and beef. Furthermore, we are equally worried that the imposition of these tariffs on everyday consumer products would amount to a de facto tax increase that disproportionately affects middle class and low-income American consumers.

According to a recent study done for the Consumer Technology Association and the National Retail Federation, increasing current U.S. tariffs on televisions by 25% would cost U.S. consumers $711 million in the first year alone; for ink and cartridges, U.S. consumers would pay an additional $529 million; and costs would also significantly increase for U.S. consumers of computer monitors (by $172 million) and batteries (by $24 million).
We believe you have many tools at your disposal to achieve our shared objectives. In particular, we urge you to work as closely as possible with our allies who share our concerns about China's unfair trade practices, and have begun to address these practices more directly thanks to US leadership. We should avoid creating disincentives for our allies to join us in taking strong action, which higher tariffs could do. The most effective approach is for the international community, and not the United States alone, to stand up to China's unfair trade practices.

Sincerely,

Erik Paulsen
Member of Congress

Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress

Barbara Comstock
Member of Congress

David Schweikert
Member of Congress

Mike Bishop
Member of Congress

Lynn Jenkins
Member of Congress

Darin LaHood
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Tom Emmer
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Andy Biggs
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Fred Upton
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