

March 31, 2015

The Hon. John Boehner
The Hon. Nancy Pelosi
The Hon. Mitch McConnell
The Hon. Harry Reid

As former U.S. officials with a deep interest in Latin America, we know firsthand the positive economic impact of trade agreements both at home and abroad. Free trade agreements (FTAs) not only eliminate barriers to trade in foreign markets, but they also support and create U.S. jobs, while helping export more American-made products and services overseas.

Out of the twenty countries with which the U.S. currently has FTAs, over half are Latin American. Our FTAs have helped Mexico and Chile become two of the world's most globalized countries, and through NAFTA, U.S. trade with Mexico and Canada has tripled to more than \$1 trillion per year. Our FTAs in the region have also helped to provide a secure legal framework for U.S. investors, protect intellectual property, and ensure effective enforcement of labor and environmental laws.

FTAs have also allowed the U.S. to deepen our partnerships with key allies in the region, such as Colombia, Peru, and Central America, fostering broader cooperation on counternarcotic, security, and migration efforts. In all, FTAs provide enormous areas of opportunity not only for domestic economic growth, but also for greater geopolitical and strategic cooperation in the region.

Critical to our ability to negotiate and implement these market-opening agreements is the passage of Trade Promotion Authority (TPA). TPA ensures a high standard for international commerce by laying out principal negotiating objectives. For over thirty years, TPA has enjoyed bipartisan support; no major trade legislation has passed Congress without it.

TPA is also the catalyst to advancing 21st century trade agreements with some of the world's most dynamic economies in Latin America and beyond. In addition to the ongoing negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), TPA would set the negotiating standards for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Five of the fourteen TPP negotiation partners are in the Western Hemisphere: Canada, Mexico, Chile and Peru, as well as the U.S. A comprehensive TPP deal would serve the dual purpose of modernizing the arrangements of NAFTA, as well as strengthening our relationship with other key partners in Latin America.

Trade is one of America's most powerful foreign policy tools, and will buttress our leadership role in the region. As such, we urge the U.S. Congress to pass TPA as swiftly as possible to ensure the advancement of these important trade agreements and of our partnership with key allies in Latin America and the world.

Signed,

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Member of Congress (1979-1987)

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Ambassador to Bolivia (1998-2000)
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Member of Congress (1973-1987)
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