

December 23, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned associations representing United States manufacturers, farmers, wholesalers, retailers, importers, exporters, and transportation and logistics providers are again writing to express our continued concerns with the status of the West Coast port labor negotiations and the impact the ongoing congestion and slowdowns are having on all segments of the economy. We are seeking your help in moving the negotiations to mediation similar to what occurred during the contentious East Coast port labor negotiations in 2012.

The labor contract negotiations between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) began on May 15, 2014 and it seems little progress has occurred since the contract expired on July 1, 2014. While there was optimism with the latest exchange of comprehensive proposals last week, the recent statement by PMA that the parties are not close to an agreement and “remain far apart on several issues” is very concerning. Even after continued negotiations through this past weekend, the PMA has now officially asked for a Federal mediator to be assigned to help the parties achieve a final deal. It is imperative that the ILWU agree to the use of a mediator.

We continue to see significant congestion at the ports which is impacting both imports and exports. While there are many reasons for the congestion beyond labor slowdowns, industry cannot begin to develop solutions until a new contract is finally resolved. We are extremely concerned the negotiations will now slip into 2015 and continue to cause problems for all industries that rely on the ports.

Importers, exporters and others are feeling the impact from the congestion and slowdowns at the ports. There have been daily news stories about the impacts on industries that rely on the ports to get their products to market. Retailers have had delays in getting holiday goods to store shelves. Manufacturers have had to slow and even stop production lines due to unavailable components delayed at the ports, creating high-levels of uncertainty for workers and employers who are aiming to deliver products to domestic and global customers. Potato farmers and apple growers have missed shipments to overseas markets, potentially closing those markets to future sales. There have even been reports of cancelled Christmas tree shipments to Asian markets.

The longer these negotiations continue, the greater the negative impact this will have on jobs, down-stream consumers, and the business operations of exporters, importers, retailers, transportation providers, manufacturers, and other stakeholders.

Our organizations continue to believe that both parties can reach an agreement that will ensure the continued success and competitiveness of these ports for the foreseeable future. However, after seven months of negotiations with little progress, we believe federal mediation is needed to help them reach a conclusion. With an official request from the PMA for a mediator, we urge the administration to work with both parties to appoint a mediator from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) in order to help them conclude their negotiations as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailer Association
Agriculture Transportation Coalition (AgTC)
Agri-Business Council of Oregon
Airforwarders Association
Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers
AMCOT
American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA)
American Association of Exporters and Importers
American Association of Port Authorities
American Cotton Shippers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Forest and Paper Association
American Frozen Food Institute
American Home Furnishings Alliance
American Import Shippers Association
American Meat Institute
American Pistachio Growers
American Potato Trade Alliance
American Pyrotechnics Association
American Soybean Association
American Trucking Associations
Association of California Recycling Industries
Association of Food Industries
Association of Washington Business
Auto Care Association
Bicycle Product Suppliers Association
BizFed
CalChamber
California Business Properties Association
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Retailers Association
California Rice Commission
California Trucking Association
California Walnut Commission

Columbia River Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association
Coalition of New England Companies for Trade (CONNECT)
Consumer Electronics Association
Cookware Manufacturers Association
Customs Brokers and Forwarders Assoc. of Northern California
Customs Brokers and International Freight Forwarders of Washington State
Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S., Inc.
Express Association of America
Fashion Accessories Shippers Association (FASA)
Food Marketing Institute
Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America
Foreign Trade Association (FTA)
Gamma Industry Processing Alliance (GIPA)
Gemini Shippers Association
Global Automakers
Green Coffee Association
Grocery Manufacturers Association
Halloween Industry Association
Harbor Association of Industry & Commerce
Idaho Potato Commission
Indiana State Poultry Association
Information Technology Industry Council
Inland Action
Inland Empire Economic Partnership
Institute of Makers of Explosives
Intermodal Association of North America
Intermodal Motor Carriers Conference (IMCC)
International Casual Furnishings Association
International Dairy Foods Association
International Irradiation Association
International Source Suppliers and Producers Association (ISSPA)
International Warehouse and Logistics Association
International Wood Products Association
Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association
Kansas Livestock Association
Leather Industries of America
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders Association
Meat Importers Council of America
Michigan Retailers Association
Minnesota Soybean Growers Association
Mississippi Poultry Association
Montana Retail Association
Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association
Motorcycle Industry Council
NAIOP SoCal

National Alfalfa & Forage Alliance
National Association of Beverage Importers
National Association of Chemical Distributors
National Association of Egg Farmers
National Association of Manufacturers
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA)
National Fisheries Institute
National Customs Brokers and Forwarders of America
National Grain and Feed Association
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Retail Federation
National Shippers Strategic Transportation Council (NASSTRAC)
National Turkey Federation
National Waste & Recycling Association
North American Export Grain Association
North American Meat Association
North American Shippers Association, Inc.
Northwest Food Processors Association
Northwest Horticultural Council
NY/NJ Foreign Freight Forwarders and Customs Brokers
Orange County Business Council
Oregon Department of Agriculture
Oregon Export Straw Association
Oregon Farm Bureau
Oregon Potato Commission
Oregon Seed Association
Oregon Women for Agriculture
Organic Trade Association
Outdoor Industry Association
Pacific Coast Council of Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders
Pacific Northwest Vegetable Association
PNASA – Pacific Northwest Asia Shippers Association
Potato Growers of Idaho
Produce Marketing Association
Promotional Products Association International (PPAI)
Propeller Club of Los Angeles-Long Beach
Retail Council of Canada
Retail Industry Leaders Association
San Diego Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association

San Gabriel Economic Partnership
Society of Chemical Manufacturers and Affiliates (SOCMA)
Southern California Shippers Association
Specialized Furniture Carriers
Specialty Crop Trade Council
Sports & Fitness Industry Association
Texas Cotton Association
The Distilled Spirits Council of the United
The Hardwood Federation
The National Industrial Transportation League (NITL)
The Presidents' Forum of the Distilled Spirits Industry
The Waterfront Coalition
Toy Industry Association
Transportation Intermediaries Association
Travel Goods Association (TGA)
United Fresh Produce Association
United States Council for International Business
United States Fashion Industry Association
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
U.S. Forage Export Council
U.S. Meat Export Federation
US. Shippers Association
U.S. Soybean Export Council
US Hide, Skin and Leather Association
USA Poultry & Egg Export Council
Washington Council on International Trade
Washington Farm Bureau
Washington Mint Growers Association
Washington Retail Association
Washington State Hay Growers Association
Washington State Potato Commission
Washington State Tree Fruit Association
Washington Trucking Associations
Western Growers
Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America
Wine and Spirits Shippers Association
Wine Institute
Wisconsin Soybean Growers Association
Women in International Trade, Los Angeles

cc: Members of Congress

Department of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx
Department of Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker
Department of Labor Secretary Thomas E. Perez
Federal Maritime Commission Chairman Mario Cordero

Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service Acting Director Allison Beck
The Honorable Jerry Brown, Governor of California
The Honorable Jay Inslee, Governor of Washington
The Honorable John Kitzhaber, Governor of Oregon