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WAYS AND MEANS TRADE SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DEVIN NUNES (R-CA)

REMARKS ON CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4660, THE COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND RELATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT OF 2015

Mr. Chairman, the United States has a strong history of negotiating high-standard trade agreements that grow our exports and create jobs. Already, international trade supports more than 4.4 million jobs in California and 38 million jobs nationwide. We are in the midst of negotiating significant trade agreements with partners in the Asia-Pacific, Europe, and elsewhere. But because Trade Promotion Authority is not in place, we are negotiating with one hand tied behind our back.

As a result, some of our negotiating partners are seeking to lower the standards of our trade agreements by excluding key products from full tariff elimination. In the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations, countries such as Japan and Canada are seeking to exclude critical agriculture products from full tariff elimination. I am deeply concerned about this development for several reasons.

First, such exclusions from full tariff elimination would harm U.S. exporters and put them at a significant disadvantage, denying them valuable market access and leading to a ripple effect as other countries seek to exclude their sensitive products from liberalization. In fact, just yesterday, key agriculture groups called on the Administration to conclude TPP without Japan if it continues to resist opening its agriculture market.

Second, allowing exclusions in TPP would make it harder to reach good outcomes in future negotiations. Already, EU negotiators, empowered by Japan's intransigence, argue that they should be able to exclude products in the TTIP negotiations. And the Chinese are doing the same in negotiations to expand the information technology agreement in the WTO.

Mr. Chairman, I had intended to introduce an amendment today that would ensure that the United States concludes only high standard agreements by prohibiting the Administration from negotiating or entering into a trade agreement that excludes any product from full tariff elimination.

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Such an amendment would ensure that we continue to secure maximum market access for our job-creating exporters. However, I decided not to introduce this amendment based on an understanding with the United States Trade Representative, Ambassador Froman, that he would work very closely with Chairman Camp and me to conclude a strong and ambitious agreement and would keep us informed about these negotiations in detail so that we may advise the Administration. I take that commitment very seriously, and it is only with this specific understanding that I am not offering this amendment tonight.

Again, I note that the current state of our negotiations shows the urgent need for TPA. Negotiating trade agreements with a strong Congressional mandate is vital to ensuring the best agreements possible. That's why I joined in introducing H.R. 3830, the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities Act, earlier this year. This legislation gives our negotiators maximum leverage to get the best deal possible in our trade negotiations and is key to unlocking new markets and creating U.S. jobs.