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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

June 12, 2009

Secretary Gary Locke
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Locke:

I write to follow up on our April 10th phone conversation regarding the current trade dispute with Mexico. I would like to reiterate the urgent need for the Administration to resolve the dispute that has prompted tariffs on 90 American products, including pears, potatoes, and cherries from Washington state.

I am pleased that you recently had an opportunity to meet with Governor Gregoire and members of Washington's agricultural community that are being hammered by these tariffs. Northwest pear growers have lost millions, and cherry growers will follow suit if the tariffs are not removed in short order. Washington is now in grave danger of losing much of its potato processing capacity to Canada as a result of these tariffs – a move that would likely be permanent.

All trucks on U.S. roadways – regardless of their country of origin – must meet our safety standards. Like most Members of Congress, I had concerns that the previous cross-border trucking program fell short of these safety goals. As you know, the Fiscal Year 2009 Omnibus spending bill unilaterally overturned the pilot program and led to Mexico's imposition of tariffs. I voted against this legislation and have supported efforts to find solutions that keep our roads safe and allow for international trade.

The Administration has the authority to negotiate with Mexico and implement a safe cross-border trucking program that complies with NAFTA while keeping American drivers safe. As the former Governor of the most trade-dependent state in the nation, you understand the devastating impact of these tariffs on our growers and processors. At a time when our economy is struggling, it is simply unacceptable that months after Mexico imposed these tariffs, no progress has been made to address the need for a new cross-border trucking program. I strongly urge you to work with your colleagues in the Administration, as well as Mexican officials, to resolve this dispute as quickly as possible. Without action, Mexico can and will take further retaliatory steps that will result in additional job losses. Our growers simply cannot afford any further delay.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Doc Hastings', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Doc Hastings
Member of Congress

CC: Secretary LaHood
Ambassador Kirk
Secretary Vilsack
Secretary Clinton