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LEGISLATIVE ALERT!

(202) 637-5057



June 1, 2011

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I write in support of H.R. 1749, the Reciprocal Market Access Act of 2011. This legislation would help boost our economy and increase exports by ensuring the elimination of foreign market access barriers before reducing U.S. tariffs on similar products.

It has long been our belief that, to be effective at creating domestic jobs and strengthening the American economy, our trade negotiators must ensure a level playing field for American-made goods, which includes a focus on non-tariff barriers, not just reduced tariffs.

The United States is widely recognized as one of the most free and open markets in the world. Yet American manufacturers routinely find their products (from high-tech to low-tech to agricultural) facing non-tariff barriers in markets around the world, despite the promises made by our trading partners. These barriers reduce or prevent sales of U.S. goods abroad, reducing our exports and harming U.S. business and workers.

To create a more level playing field, ensuring that American producers are not competing with one hand tied behind their back, the Reciprocal Market Access Act would require the President to certify to Congress that the United States has obtained the reduction or elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers and policies and practices of a foreign country before the U.S. would agree to reduce or eliminate tariffs on like products coming from that trading partner. This requirement would ensure that our trade negotiators focus on both tariff and non-tariff barriers.

To enforce reciprocal market access, the bill also contains a “snap back” provision allowing U.S. tariffs to rise on particular products should the U.S. learn that its trading partner either re-imposed or failed to eliminate its tariffs or non-tariff barriers as promised. Such clear enforcement provisions are largely absent in our current trade policy and prevent the U.S. from effectively ensuring that our trading partners live up to the promises they make in our free trade agreements. This legislation will help the United States Trade Representative (USTR) support domestic industries and jobs when our trading partners fail to live up to their commitments.

The AFL-CIO strongly believes that the U.S. must do more to support domestic job creation and economic growth. Ensuring that U.S. exports achieve the access promised in our trade deals would go a long way toward achieving that goal. We encourage you to support the Reciprocal Market Access Act and similar efforts to ensure American products and services are not unfairly locked out of foreign markets.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Samuel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and a long, sweeping tail.

William Samuel, Director
Government Affairs Department