

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  
Corn Refiners 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  
Midwest Shippers 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 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