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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

March 30, 2009

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, Southeast
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Secretary LaHood:

As the representative of an agricultural area heavily impacted by the recent tariffs implemented by Mexico, I write to request your assistance to quickly resolve the current NAFTA dispute with Mexico.

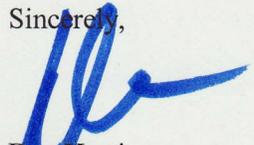
I believe all trucks on U.S. roadways must meet the highest of safety standards. Like most Members of Congress, I have expressed concerns in the past that the former cross-border trucking program fell short of its safety goals. The Department of Transportation, along with the U.S. Trade Representative and Congress must continue to work with our counterparts in Mexico to find a bilateral solution to this issue that protects the safety of our roadways while eliminating these retaliatory tariffs. At a time when our government should be supporting policies that stimulate economic growth, these tariffs are having a negative impact on jobs in Central Washington and across rural America. It is vital to our economy that a resolution with Mexico is reached soon.

Specifically in Central Washington state, pear, apricot, cherry, and potato growers and processors are severely impacted by these tariffs. The Washington state potato industry shipped approximately \$40 million worth of frozen potato products to Mexico last year. Mexico is the third largest market for frozen potato exports and U.S. potato growers and producers will lose millions if these tariffs remain. Pear, apricot, and cherry growers estimate they will lose over \$6 million if this issue is not resolved before this summer.

Agriculture is the backbone of Central Washington's economy, and a quick resolution to this matter is essential to the continued success of growers and processors in my district. I appreciate your efforts on this issue thus far, and encourage you to continue to work with interested stakeholders to implement a safe cross border truck program that satisfies the Mexican government while keeping U.S. drivers safe.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,


Doc Hastings
Member of Congress