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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
October 1, 2010

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

The Honorable Gary Locke
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, Northwest
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary LaHood and Secretary Locke:

I write today regarding the retaliatory tariffs implemented by Mexico that are having a devastating impact on Washington state's agriculture based economy.

It has been eighteen months since I first contacted you about this trade dispute. At that time, Central Washington state pear, cherry, potato, and apricot growers and processors were severely impacted by these tariffs. Due to continued U.S. inaction, Mexico expanded the tariffs to include apples just as the annual harvest got underway.

Mexico is Washington's largest apple export market and the tariffs could cost growers up to \$44 million per year. This is on top of the tariffs combined impact on pears, cherries, and apricots of \$25 million and a market loss for potato exports of more than \$28 million.

I have had the opportunity to read the Administration's recently released report on its National Export Initiative. It noted that the goal of doubling exports over five years "will only happen if U.S. companies, farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises – the engines of economic growth – receive the encouragement and support they need as they seek new markets for their goods and services." If the Administration is serious about getting our economy back on track and increasing U.S. exports, a plan to resolve the Mexican tariff dispute must be a top priority. The Teamsters Union can no longer be allowed to block a solution and fair trade agreements like the pending deal with Colombia must move forward.

In our past conversations and correspondence about the retaliatory tariffs, I have been told that the Administration was working on a plan that would be released "soon." Yet, requests for details have been met with silence. In my view, eighteen months is far too long to leave our nation's farmers and manufacturers without answers and to leave jobs at risk. I write to request a copy of your plan that will allow these tariffs to be lifted and details about any progress that has been made.

Thank you for your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Doc Hastings".

Doc Hastings
Member of Congress