United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 21, 2011

The Honorable Ron Kirk
United States Trade Representative
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Kirk:

We write to express our concern about India's longstanding restrictive trade policies with respect to poultry and the variety of poultry products from the United States. These non-scientifically based policies are denying our poultry producers and processors access to a market with great economic potential. We are thankful that the U.S. has for years raised concerns over India's trade policies. Given that India's trade barriers remain in place, we respectfully request that you continue to work to resolve this longstanding issue during your upcoming meeting in mid-January with the senior government leadership of India.

As you know, India uses a variety of trade barriers to prohibit the importation of U.S. poultry. One issue involves India's position on the viral disease avian influenza (AI). India's trade policies do not conform to World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) standards and are not scientifically justified. India makes no distinction between low-pathogenic AI and the highly-pathogenic AI. India's recently released risk assessment is not consistent with international standards for conducting a risk analysis and does not contain sufficient scientific evidence to support India's AI restrictions.

The U.S., in cooperation with the major poultry-producing states, has one of the most comprehensive and rigorous programs in the world to prevent, control, and eradicate AI. Few, if any, countries have in place the stringent biosecurity measures and controls to prevent AI from becoming a problem to poultry and, more importantly, to the human population. The U.S. has set the gold standard on this issue and has a track record on AI that is unsurpassed around the world. Despite the United States' track record on AI and the very effective measures in place for AI, India continues to use this non-scientifically based position to prohibit U.S. poultry to access the Indian market.

With two of the United States' top poultry markets having been severely disrupted in the past three years, it is especially important that efforts be undertaken to replace them. The National Chicken Council estimates that U.S. poultry exports to India could exceed $300 million annually if appropriate, fair market access was provided in accordance with India's obligations as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

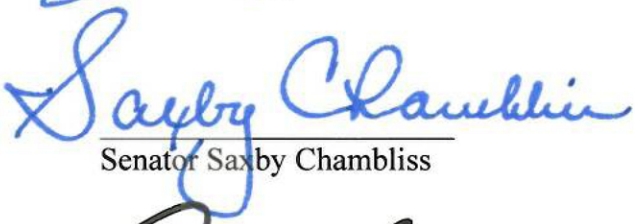
Accordingly, we respectfully request that during your upcoming discussions with the government of India, you strongly explain the important biosecurity measures that have been implemented in the U.S. and that the continued use of non-scientifically based measures to prevent trade is unacceptable. We look forward to working with you on this very important issue and thank you for your full and careful attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Senator Christopher Coons

Senator Johnny Isakson

Senator Thomas Carper



Senator Saxby Chambliss

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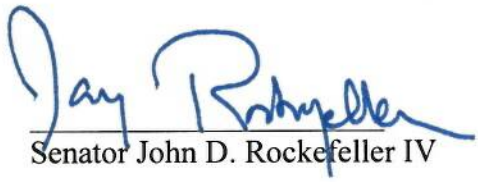
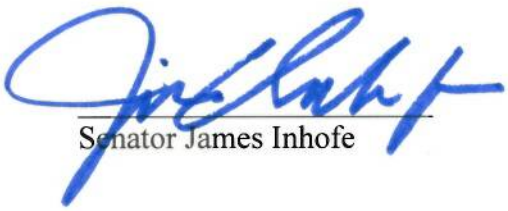


Senator John D. Rockefeller IV



Senator James Inhofe

Senator Mark Warner