

May 7, 2015

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitchell McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Speaker, Mr. Leader, Madam Pelosi, and Senator Reid:

We write to express our strongest possible support for the enactment of Trade Promotion Authority legislation, which is critical to the successful conclusion of two vital trade agreements: the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

While the economic benefits of both these agreements would be substantial, as former Secretaries of Defense and military leaders we believe there is an equally compelling strategic rationale for TPP and TTIP.

First and foremost, the conclusion of these agreements would be a powerful symbol of continued U.S. leadership and engagement globally. They would reinforce relationships with important allies and partners in critical regions of the world. By binding us closer together with Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia and Australia, among others, TPP would strengthen existing and emerging security relationships in the Asia-Pacific, and reassure the region of America's long-term staying power. In Europe, TTIP would reinvigorate the transatlantic partnership and send an equally strong signal about the commitment of the United States to our European allies.

The successful conclusion of TPP and TTIP would also draw in other nations and encourage them to undertake political and economic reforms. The result will be deeper regional economic integration, increased political cooperation, and ultimately greater stability in the two regions of the world that will have the greatest long-term impact on U.S. prosperity and security.

Indeed, TPP in particular will shape an economic dynamic over the next several decades that will link the United States with one of the world's most vibrant and dynamic regions. If, however, we fail to move forward with TPP, Asian economies will almost certainly develop along a China-centric model. In fact, China is already pursuing an alternative regional free trade initiative. TPP, combined with T-TIP, would allow the United States and our closest allies to help shape the rules and standards for global trade.

The stakes are clear. There are tremendous strategic benefits to TPP and TTIP, and there would be harmful strategic consequences if we fail to secure these agreements. In both Asia-Pacific and the Atlantic, our allies and partners would question our commitments, doubt our resolve, and inevitably look to other partners. America's prestige, influence, and leadership are on the line. With TPP originating in the Bush administration, these agreements are fundamentally bipartisan in nature and squarely in our national security interest. It is vitally important that we seize the new strategic opportunities these agreements offer our nation.

Signed,

Harold Brown, Former Secretary of Defense

William S. Cohen, Former Secretary of Defense

Robert M. Gates, Former Secretary of Defense

Chuck Hagel, Former Secretary of Defense

Leon E. Panetta, Former Secretary of Defense

William J. Perry, Former Secretary of Defense

Donald H. Rumsfeld, Former Secretary of Defense

Admiral Dennis C. Blair, USN (Ret.)

General James E. Cartwright, USMC (Ret.)

Admiral Edmund P. Giambastiani, Jr., USN (Ret.)

General James Mattis, USMC (Ret.)

General David H. Petraeus, USA (Ret.)

General Colin Powell, USA (Ret.)

Admiral Gary Roughead, USN (Ret.)

General Hugh Shelton, USA (Ret.)

Admiral James Stavridis, USN (Ret.)

Admiral Robert F. Willard, USN (Ret.)