

## COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

April 9, 2019

The Honorable Robert E. Lighthizer  
U.S. Trade Representative  
600 17th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

As my colleagues and I review the terms of the new agreement to replace the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), I can't help but recall when NAFTA was presented to Congress a quarter century ago. This time needs to be different.

In 1993, the Ways and Means Committee held hearings on the "supplemental agreements" on labor and environment that were being negotiated to address Democrats' concerns. Recalling the loss of manufacturing jobs in New England in the two decades prior, I raised concerns that NAFTA stoked the fear that American jobs would be on a continual road to Mexico where wages would always be unfairly low. That people who lose their jobs to lower wage competition are at best offered retraining, often for jobs that pay less and are less good. I raised concerns that there is nothing worse, after an agreement has been reached, than for one side to feel it had gotten a raw deal. And that border cleanup and border infrastructure were imperatives for an America entering into the NAFTA.

A lot of promises were made to secure Congressional approval for the deal. Administration and other public officials assured me that trade needs to be part of a comprehensive economic package that enhances and supports America's manufacturing base, requiring stimulus, investment, and permanent R&D incentives. As part of making NAFTA a reality, America would get our own economic house in order structurally. Training and assistance programs would be improved. The supplemental labor and environment agreements would have teeth and raise standards in North America rather than depress them. Addressing border infrastructure and cleanup would be number one priorities once NAFTA was put in place.

The key promises that were made in 1993 were not kept. Others were kept for a period and then forgotten as successive administrations moved on to the next agreement.

To be certain, over the last quarter century, NAFTA accomplished many things. Certain iconic U.S. industries achieved a high degree of integration across North America. But as I had feared, many Americans felt NAFTA was a raw deal. In fact, the supplemental labor and environment agreements did not have teeth. NAFTA is blamed for the further loss of American