

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

May 18, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
H-232, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan:

Last week, on May 9, you stated that May 17, 2018 is the date by which the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) must submit to Congress “paper” related to the renegotiated North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), in order for NAFTA to be considered by Congress by the end of this year under the procedures set forth in the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act (TPA).

Three years ago, in the pages of the Wall Street Journal, you presented your case in support of TPA to the American people. You argued that TPA puts Congress in charge of trade agreement negotiations. “By establishing TPA,” you wrote, “Congress will send a signal to the world. America’s trading partners will know that the U.S. is trustworthy and then put their best offers on the table. America’s rivals will know that the U.S. is serious and won’t abandon the field.”

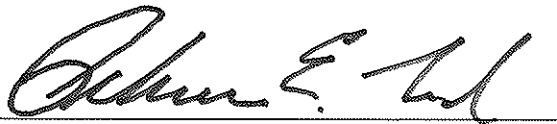
In your remarks last week, you declared a deadline for USTR to submit a notice of its intent to sign a new NAFTA deal to Congress. Although TPA does not provide for a hard deadline and many of the TPA timelines set out maximum time frames that provide for a certain amount of flexibility, you emphasized that if USTR misses the May 17 deadline, Congress will not vote on a new NAFTA in December. Earlier this week, Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady reinforced the notion that completion of a NAFTA deal this week is important for consideration of the agreement during this Congress.

A week ago today, shortly after you set your May 17 deadline, the U.S. Trade Representative and his counterparts from Canada and Mexico emerged from several weeks of intensive negotiations with no breakthroughs and no agreements, in principle or otherwise. This past week, the three NAFTA ministers have reportedly remained on call, but have not met. It is May 18 today and USTR has not submitted to Congress any notices related to the NAFTA renegotiation.

Noting that in the last 24 hours, you moved the goal posts on your own deadline by a seemingly arbitrary two weeks, at this juncture, we write to ask you, as the author of TPA, what happens now? What are the next steps that you intend for the House of Representatives and the U.S.

Congress to take during the remainder of the 115th Congress, on President Trump's commitment to renegotiate, modernize, and rebalance NAFTA? NAFTA is almost 25 years old. It fails to reflect the economy of today. And it has failed too many American workers, families, and communities. We cannot afford to sit back and be satisfied with the status quo. We, and the American people, await your answers eagerly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Richard E. Neal", written over a horizontal line.

Richard E. Neal
Ranking Member

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bill Pascrell, Jr.", written over a horizontal line.

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Trade