

**Open Letter to the Speaker of the House and Members of the House of Representatives
from foreign policy and national security experts supporting Trade Promotion Authority**

June 8, 2015

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232 US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner:

Many conservatives have criticized the Obama administration's approach to foreign policy and national security over the past six-and-a-half years. They see an attitude that curtails American leadership abroad and leaves the country less secure and prosperous. By contrast, international trade, the subject of our letter today, is one area where the U.S. can be a global leader in both security and prosperity.

Under President Obama, the United States is less trusted by its allies and less feared by its adversaries. This change is evident not only in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Iran but in Eastern Europe, Syria, Russia, China, South America, and other countries as well.

While we and many others have strongly disagreed with many of President Obama's foreign policy and defense decisions, under our Constitution it is the president who ultimately conducts foreign policy. Outside of aggressive oversight, there is often little opportunity for Congress to determine whether the United States retrenches or leads. But one such opportunity is trade.

Soon the House will consider Trade Promotion Authority, which is the necessary step for the conclusion of trade agreements. Having already passed the Senate, this bill will draw attention from around the world. The eyes of our allies, our potential allies, and our adversaries will be focused on your vote.

Washington may be focused on things like the timing of the vote, specific process language in the bill, or even the fate of unrelated policies, but to the rest of the world this vote is simple: Will the United States continue to be a world leader, or will it abdicate and cede this role to other nations? Right or wrong, keen observers across the globe will look at this vote as an indication of whether retrenchment and isolation is limited to the current administration or is shared by the U.S. Congress.

The United States is currently in the midst of negotiations with 11 other countries in the Asia-Pacific region over the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. These negotiations are essentially on hold pending the outcome of the vote on TPA. It is not an exaggeration to say that should TPA fail to pass, negotiations would falter and fail to conclude successfully, and many of

these 11 other countries would look to negotiate with China. In fact, China, at last year's APEC summit in Beijing, highlighted its preferred trade arrangement, the Free Trade Area of Asia Pacific. Our TPP partners resisted China's overture; that may not remain the case if we undermine TPP.

The United States is also in the middle of discussions with the European Union over another potential trade agreement. At a time when we are asking our European allies to join us in sanctioning Russia—a major trading partner for many—a defeat of TPA would signal that the United States is not serious about a closer economic relationship with our allies.

It is an historical fact that trade enhances national security. The better our economic relationship with foreign countries, the stronger our national security. But it is impossible to build those new economic relationships without Trade Promotion Authority.

We understand those who argue that we can't trust the current president with TPA and that we should wait for a new president to take office. But the world isn't going to hit the pause button while we await a new president. Moreover, the TPA bill before Congress includes strong parameters to constrain what the president negotiates and includes aggressive congressional oversight. On this issue, the United States either engages and leads or it retreats and empowers our adversaries.

For these reasons we strongly urge you to join the Senate and quickly pass Trade Promotion Authority.

Respectfully,

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