

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 19, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

On May 1, the Department of Commerce declared that after reaching “an impasse” in talks with Mexico on sugar trade disputes, the U.S. government has decided to “resume the collection of antidumping (AD) and countervailing duties (CVD) on sugar imports on June 5, 2017, unless an agreement is reached.” We write to you to express our concerns that an increase in the tariffs on imported sugar will increase the price of food to American consumers.

As you know, suspension agreements were previously implemented to avoid collection of the duties, but have drawn criticism from many quarters. However, the current suspension agreements clearly have not worked. They have harmed U.S. cane sugar refiners by creating a shortage of raw cane sugar, the refiners’ chief input. The agreements have harmed the food and beverage companies who use sugar in their products by artificially driving up raw sugar prices to historically high levels. By introducing new levels of complexity to the already-byzantine world of sugar policy, the suspension agreements have made the U.S. sugar regime even worse than before.

Workable, fair suspension agreements would be far preferable to actual imposition of AD and CVD duties, which would likely cut off all or most trade with Mexico. However, some proposals that have been made by the U.S. sugar lobby would actually make the agreements more onerous and burdensome, not less – and so would constitute the worst outcome of all. In particular, we would like to stress that –

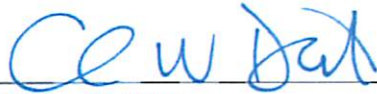
- While a higher level of raw sugar should be required in the agreements, this must be done without the government picking winners and losers among private companies, so an improved set of agreements should ensure fair competition and not effectively limit shipments to only certain cane refineries; and
- The 2014 farm bill established price support levels for both raw and refined sugar, and Congress has taken no action to authorize the Administration to increase these support

levels, so improved suspension agreements should avoid any reference prices that effectively support U.S. sugar prices significantly above levels debated and approved by Congress, and in no case should reference prices be increased from their levels in the existing suspension agreements.

Finally, we strongly urge you to consult with, and take into account the interests of, the companies that make food products and beverages using sugar. These companies employ more than 600,000 of our fellow Americans directly, and account for many more indirect jobs. It is time for a balanced approach to the complicated issue of U.S.-Mexico sugar trade. These bilateral negotiations should not be an excuse for the U.S. sugar lobby to extract yet more benefits from its customers through market manipulation that flies in the face of open and fair competition.

We appreciate your consideration of these points as further deliberations on these issues continue, and look forward to continuing to work with you.

Sincerely,



Charles W. Dent  
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



Virginia Foxx  
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



Jackie Walorski  
Member of Congress



Chuck Fleischmann  
Member of Congress

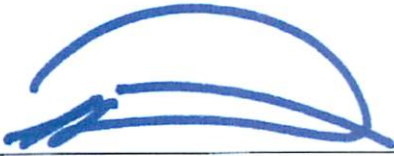


Phil Roe, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Bill Shuster  
Member of Congress

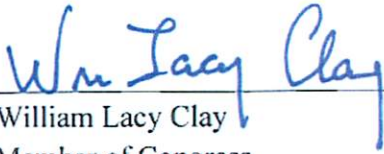




Scott DesJarlais, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Lou Barletta  
Member of Congress



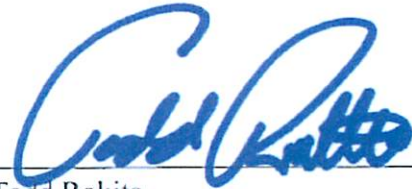
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Eric Swalwell  
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Derek Kilmer  
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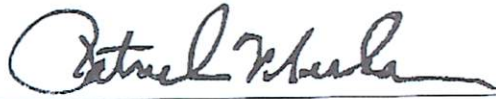
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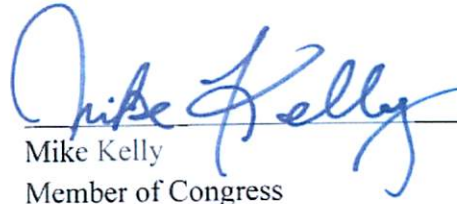
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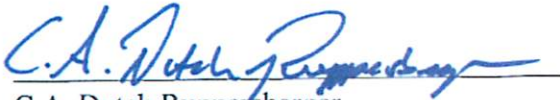
Ryan Costello  
Member of Congress



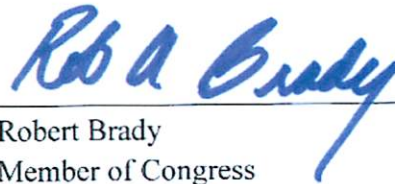
Brian Fitzpatrick  
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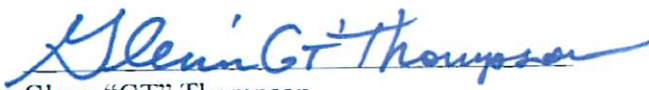
Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress



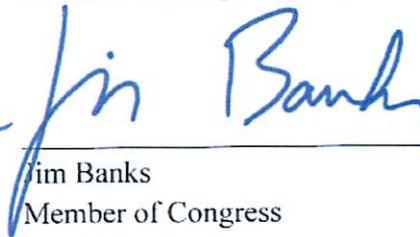
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Dwight Evans  
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Louie Gohmert  
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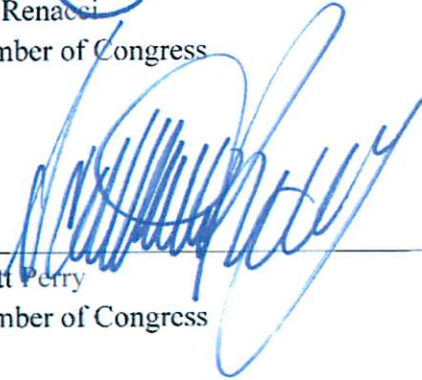
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Steve Womack  
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Ann McLane Kuster  
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Mark Amodei  
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Marsha Blackburn  
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Ann Wagner  
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