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Contact: Jennifer Cummings
The Fratelli Group
202-822-9491

USA*Engage Statement on Syria Sanctions

Washington, DC – USA*Engage today released the following statement:

“USA*Engage fully understands why the Obama administration has decided to place a unilateral prohibition on U.S. persons worldwide from dealing in the sale of crude oil from Syria. At the same time, USA*Engage realizes that this action by itself is unlikely to influence the behavior of the Syrian regime. After all, a similar prohibition has long been in effect on crude oil from Iran with no discernable impact on the behavior of that regime.

“The lesson of history is that foreign policy economic sanctions are only effective when they are taken in concert with the major trading partners of the target nation. Even true multilateral sanctions are only effective in the long run and then only in concert with other policy measures. Since its founding, USA*Engage has stressed that unilateral foreign policy sanctions are not a silver bullet to be used reflexively to influence foreign behavior. In fact in many cases they have been counterproductive and have unintended consequences for American businesses in an increasingly globalized marketplace.

“This Administration has acknowledged this reality in its response to other foreign policy crises. The situation in Syria is extremely critical and we hope and trust that U.S. policy will move in concert with regional and international partners to achieve regime change in that country.”

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*USA*Engage (www.usaengage.org) is a coalition of small and large businesses, agriculture groups and trade associations working to seek alternatives to the proliferation of unilateral U.S. foreign policy sanctions and to promote the benefits of U.S. engagement abroad. Established in 1997 and organized under the National Foreign Trade Council (www.nftc.org), USA*Engage leads a campaign to inform policy-makers, opinion-leaders, and the public about the counterproductive nature of unilateral sanctions, the importance of exports and overseas investment for American competitiveness and jobs, and the role of American companies in promoting human rights and democracy world wide.*