

**Business Council for International Understanding
Business Roundtable
Council of the Americas
Coalition of Services Industries
Emergency Committee for American Trade
National Association of Manufacturers
National Foreign Trade Council
United States Council on International Business
U.S. Chamber of Commerce**

October 21, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
Ranking Member, Senate Finance
Committee

The Honorable John Kerry
Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee

The Honorable Richard Lugar
Ranking Member, Senate Foreign
Relations Committee

Dear Senators Reid, McConnell, Baucus, Grassley, Kerry and Lugar:

On behalf of the more than 260,000 American exporters and companies doing business around the world, we write to ask your assistance in pressing for votes to be held on five nominees to key commercial sub-Cabinet posts in the Commerce, Treasury and State Departments, and the Office of the United States Trade Representative. While these positions sit empty, the interests of American exporters and their workers are suffering.

American business exported \$1.8 trillion of goods and services last year, supporting millions of jobs across the country. The U.S. government is vital to opening markets abroad, ensuring level playing fields, preventing discrimination in favor of local interests, and ensuring transparency and fair competition in business dealings overseas. For decades, senior officials and ambassadors appointed by presidents of both parties have been vigorous advocates for U.S. exporters.

However, in order to support U.S. trade interests effectively, the Administration must have in place the key officials to advance trade policy and interact with senior officials of other governments. Unfortunately, nominees in five key positions have been unable to obtain votes in the United States Senate; and this is hampering the advancement of U.S. trade objectives and jobs:

- Miriam Sapiro, nominee for Deputy U.S. Trade Representative with responsibility for World Trade Organization (WTO) affairs and trade relations with Europe, Middle East and the Americas. She was nominated on April 20, 2009 and was voted unanimously out of the Finance Committee on July 23rd. Her nomination has yet to be scheduled for a vote on the floor.

- Francisco Sanchez, nominee for Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade. He was nominated on April 20, 2009, and was voted unanimously out of the Banking Committee on May 21. He has yet to receive a hearing before the Finance Committee, which has joint jurisdiction.
- Lael Brainard, nominee for Under Secretary of Treasury for International Affairs. She was nominated on March 23, 2009. She has yet to receive a hearing before the Finance Committee.
- Arturo Valenzuela, nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs. He was nominated on June 8, 2009 and was voted favorably out of the Foreign Relations Committee on July 28, 2009. His nomination has yet to be scheduled for a vote on the floor.
- Thomas Shannon, nominee for Ambassador to Brazil (and currently Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs). He was nominated on June 1, 2009, and was voted favorably out of the Foreign Relations Committee on July 20, 2009. His nomination has yet to be scheduled for a vote on the floor.

We deeply respect the Constitutional role of the United States Senate in providing advice and consent to President on senior nominations. Indeed, there is no doubt that a thorough and searching Senate confirmation process has proven to be of great benefit to U.S. foreign policy over the last two centuries.

However, these vacancies matter, and the passage of each week places America at a larger disadvantage in leveling the global playing field. As representatives of U.S. business interests, we respectfully urge swift action on each of the five nominees named above. If they have passed out of the Committee approval process, we urge the leadership to schedule immediate votes on their nominations. If they are awaiting the Committee hearing process, we urge the completion of the committee investigations and the holding of appropriate hearings.

Respectfully,

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