The Honorable Robert Lighthizer
Ambassador
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

We are concerned with the current negotiations on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), specifically with respect to Mexico’s labor policies. The suppression of wages and lack of labor rights continue to result in the outsourcing of U.S. manufacturing jobs and low wage growth.

Mexico’s policy of suppressed low wages, combined with increased protection of investment, became a magnet for its industrial growth. A key factor has been the maintenance of very low labor costs, ingrained in a structure that eliminates any voices for workers in the workplace. The current objectives in the NAFTA renegotiation, and recent Administration statements do not do nearly enough to address this basic structural problem.

Even after Mexico’s constitutional reforms this past year, we have yet to see meaningful progress on the ground or have confidence in their impact. The authoritarian style labor structure, stacked labor boards and government aligned unions combine to limit the ability of workers to seek wage increases. Low wages, a lack of independent unions and an inability for workers to collectively bargain in Mexico have hurt American workers and led to the outsourcing of jobs to Mexico. Increasing labor rights in Mexico will help workers there climb out of poverty, and also protect American jobs and wages from a race to the bottom.

The text USTR has currently proposed must therefore only be a starting point in our negotiations with Mexico. Any new NAFTA must have strong, clear and binding provisions that address Mexico’s labor conditions. Given the ingrained resistance to labor rights in Mexico, we must demand real and identifiable progress on labor reforms take place before Congress votes on a renegotiated NAFTA.

While many of us have ongoing concerns over additional provisions of NAFTA affecting labor, we felt it was important to highlight with a unified voice the primary source of significant outsourcing: Mexico’s low wages and lack of labor rights. Trade agreements must ensure that as
trade and competition grows, they work to harmonize wages and rights upwards for American workers and workers in other nations. Functioning core labor standards promote expanding markets benefiting workers in both countries. We urge you to keep your promises to America’s workers and remedy the faults of the original NAFTA by holding Mexico accountable for its labor practices and negotiate strong protections in any agreement.

Sincerely,

Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Sander M. Levin  
Member of Congress

Rosa L. DeLauro  
Member of Congress

Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress

Robert C. Scott  
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Janice Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress
Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress

John Lewis  
Member of Congress

Sean Patrick Maloney  
Member of Congress

Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

Peter DeFazio  
Member of Congress

John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

Robert A. Brady  
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee  
Member of Congress

Booie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

Louise M. Slaughter  
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress

Susan A. Davis  
Member of Congress

Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress
Matt Cartwright  
Member of Congress

Michael F. Doyle  
Member of Congress

Beto O'Rourke  
Member of Congress

Walter B. Jones  
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Lujan  
Member of Congress

Colleen Hanabusa  
Member of Congress

Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress

Peter Visclosky  
Member of Congress

Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress

Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack  
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

Tom O’Halleran  
Member of Congress
Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress

Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress

Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress

Jacky Rosen  
Member of Congress

Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan  
Member of Congress

Frederica Wilson  
Member of Congress

A. Donald McEachin  
Member of Congress

Brenda L. Lawrence  
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

Brendan F. Boyle  
Member of Congress

André Carson  
Member of Congress

Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress

James E. Clyburn  
Member of Congress

Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress
Al Green
Member of Congress

Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

Alma Adams

William Lacy Clay
Member of Congress

Cedric L. Richmond
Member of Congress

Denny Heck
Member of Congress

Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

Pete Aguilar
Member of Congress

Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress
Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

Tim Walz  
Member of Congress

Bradley S. Schneider  
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

Kurt Schrader  
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress

Nancy M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

Bennie Thompson  
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

Luis V. Gutiérrez  
Member of Congress

Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

Ed Perlmutter  
Member of Congress

James A. Himes  
Member of Congress

Joseph Crowley  
Member of Congress
Elizabeth H. Esty
Member of Congress

Joseph P. Kennedy III
Member of Congress

Ruben Kihuen
Member of Congress

Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

Mark Takano
Member of Congress

Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress

Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress

David E. Price
Member of Congress

Jared Polis
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

Doris Matsui
Member of Congress
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress

Nita Lowey
Member of Congress

Raúl Labrador
Member of Congress

Anthony Brown
Member of Congress

Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

Charlie Crist
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

Marc Veasey
Member of Congress
Al Lawson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Collin C. Peterson
Member of Congress

David Scott
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

John K. Delaney
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress