

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2003

Mr. Kelly Parkhill
Director for Industry Support and Analysis, Import Administration
Department of Commerce
Herbert Clark Hoover Building, Room 3713
14th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Mr. Parkhill,

I write today concerning the request for comments on the extension and expansion of the import monitoring system for steel that was first instituted by President Bush in 2002. The purpose of the steel import monitoring program is to provide steel producers and consumers with accurate and timely information on imports of certain steel products. As you know, this is a system of great importance to many of my constituents in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

On Wednesday, August 18, Jim Jochum, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Import Administration, signed a Federal Register notice requesting comment on possible enhancements and modifications to the current steel import monitoring system. This correspondence is in response to the Federal Register notice.

In December 2003, President Bush pledged to retain the program, and now it is up to the Department of Commerce to fulfill that promise. As I am sure you recall, on December 4, 2003, when President Bush suspended the Sec. 201 steel safeguard provisions, he stated that: "To keep the positive momentum going, we will continue our steel import licensing and monitoring program so that my Administration can quickly respond to future import surges that could unfairly damage the industry."

This program complies with our WTO obligations, is no hindrance to trade, and provides needed information on the state of steel imports. The program provides for the early collection and release of data that will be made publicly available in any event (i.e., as part of the normal Census trade statistics). It provides no material burden on importers, and in no way limits imports.

The program is similar to one in place in Canada for years. Better information is valuable for both consumers and producers of steel products. Expanding the program to make it indefinite--and thereby cover all steel products (not just the products covered in the Section 201 action)--is a sound decision that will provide better transparency for trade in steel products. Because of the importance of this measure to our domestic steel manufacturing base, it is critical that the Department of Commerce make the import monitoring system permanent.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of additional assistance to you.

Sincerely,



Rick Santorum
United States Senate