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Kelly Parkhill
Director for Industry Support and Analysis
Import Administration, Room 3713
Department of Commerce
14th Street and Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

RE: Steel Import Monitoring and Analysis System

Dear Mr. Parkhill:

I am responding to the August 25th request for comments on the steel import monitoring system and to urge that the Administration quickly move forward on its commitment to establish an expanded program. It has been more than 9 months since this commitment was made, and the time is long overdue to get this vital program off the ground.

As you may know, I am a strong proponent of this program and I introduced legislation which extends and expands the current steel import monitoring program. It is my hope the Administration will move forward on this program. The volatility in world steel markets, as well as the history of unfair trade in this sector, make it imperative that policy makers and industry participants alike have access to up-to-date and accurate information on imports. While the existing import monitoring program has proven useful and effective, it suffers from several defects. In the first instance, it is limited to the products covered by the President's steel safeguard decision. In addition, the existing program will expire next March if nothing is done to extend it. The bureaucratic delay we have seen in enacting a permanent and expanded system makes no sense – particularly given the importance of this initiative and the relative simplicity of extending an already-existing program to new products.

The men and women in Illinois and throughout the industry have been taking extraordinary steps to recover from the steel crisis and to change the face of American steel. This program and the enhancements the President has promised are important to them, and are a topic of frequent communications from my constituents. The failure of the Administration to follow through on its promise to the industry threatens to have serious consequences – particularly if this program is allowed to expire. With the men and women in the industry doing their part to restructure and recover, the government should be doing its part – and an obvious first step is to ensure that accurate and timely import data is provided.

It is worth recalling that the steel import monitoring system is fully WTO consistent and in fact is similar to programs long in effect abroad. There is no reason that policy makers and industry participants in this country should not have access to this same type of data. More information can only be a good thing for the market and for everyone involved.

The expansion of this program can and should be accomplished in a matter of weeks. The time to complete this work is long overdue and I would urge the Administration to get a new program up and running immediately.

I look forward to hearing from you on this issue.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator