

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 18, 2011

Ambassador Ron Kirk
United States Trade Representative
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Kirk:

On behalf of the agricultural communities throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia, we write regarding an issue of great concern to the farmers we represent. It is our understanding that several parties are encouraging the administration to exclude tobacco and tobacco products from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement negotiations. These parties assert that, based on their misguided interpretation of the Doggett Amendment, USTR should promote America's public health values abroad.

We urge you to reject this flawed concept. Tobacco is the fifth largest exported agricultural product from Virginia, and the Commonwealth is the fourth largest tobacco exporter in the country. Tobacco is one of America's most export dependant agricultural products. Carving tobacco out, both in the TPP and as a precedent for future agreements, will irreparably damage this vital aspect of our economy. By excluding tobacco from the TPP and future trade agreements, particularly given the economic challenges we currently face, the administration will cause many of Virginia's tobacco farmers to lose income and ultimately cause job loss. The federal government should be working to increase jobs in this country, but the notion of excluding tobacco from these agreements contradicts that mission.

This argument also misinterprets the Doggett Amendment, which merely requires the executive neither to promote tobacco or tobacco products nor to seek to minimize restrictions on the marketing of tobacco or tobacco products. We do not believe that negotiating a trade agreement represents promotion of tobacco or inhibits a foreign government's ability to regulate the marketing of tobacco products. As a case in point, since the Doggett Amendment's enactment, the U.S. has completed a dozen free trade agreements, none of which have carved out tobacco.

We ask that you and your colleagues in the administration oppose efforts to exclude tobacco and tobacco products from trade agreements. Thank you for your consideration and your support for agricultural jobs in Virginia.

Sincerely,








