

National Association of Foreign-Trade Zones

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NEWS RELEASE

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Washington, D.C. – The National Association of Foreign-Trade Zones today joined with the U.S. Council for International Business and other pro-trade organizations in calling for passage of Trade Facilitation and Customs Enforcement legislation before Congress adjourns for the year.

In a letter addressed to Speaker Paul Ryan, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, the group applauded the recent House of Representatives call for conferees and urged the leadership to take prompt action and pass a reconciled customs bill.

“It has been over 20 years since the U.S. Congress has passed true customs modernization legislation,” the joint letter stated. “Continued customs modernization is essential to providing U.S. Customs and Border Protection (U.S. CBP) the support it needs to safeguard America's borders while enhancing economic prosperity, and ensuring stability for American importers and exporters.”

In signing-on to the joint letter, NAFTZ President Daniel Griswold said “NAFTZ is committed to the timely implementation of the Automated Commercial Environment. Passage of Customs Authorization with full funding of ACE has been the top legislative priority of the association and an issue we raise in every meeting with members of Congress and their staffs. We are encouraged that Congress at last appears ready to move forward with bipartisan approval of this important legislation.” More than 12 percent of U.S. imported goods are admitted to foreign-trade zones.

“The bill is vital to the U.S. economy,” the joint letter stated. “We urge Conferees to resolve the outstanding issues, so that the Trade Facilitation and Customs Enforcement bill can move forward, in a bipartisan fashion, for the president’s signature this year.” The full text of the joint letter is attached.

-END-



December 3, 2015

Speaker Paul Ryan
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Via Email

Dear Speaker Ryan, Democratic Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Reid:

We, the undersigned associations, applaud actions by the House of Representatives on Tuesday, December 1, 2015. We are pleased to hear that the House has called for and appointed Conferees, and that the Trade Facilitation and Customs Enforcement bill is in Conference, where the remaining matters will be resolved. We are writing to urge you to take prompt action and pass reconciled Trade Facilitation and Customs Enforcement legislation next week, before Congress adjourns.

It has been over 20 years since the U.S. Congress has passed true customs modernization legislation. The Customs Modernization Act was passed in 1993. The most recent customs modernization and reauthorization came in the wake of 9/11, and focused primarily on transitioning U.S. Customs to the newly formed Department of Homeland Security.

During the 114th Congress, the House and Senate have passed independent and differing versions of the Trade Facilitation and Customs Enforcement bill. While we understand that there are still differences between the legislative texts, we strongly encourage the passage of the Trade Facilitation and Customs Enforcement bill within the 2015 legislative calendar. Continued customs modernization is essential to providing U.S. Customs and Border Protection (U.S. CBP) the support it needs to safeguard America's borders while enhancing economic prosperity, and ensuring stability for American importers and exporters.

The bill is vital to the U.S. economy. We urge Conferees to resolve the outstanding issues, so that the Trade Facilitation and Customs Enforcement bill can move forward, in a bipartisan fashion, for the President's signature this year. As we move into 2016, the U.S. government as well as importers and exports are faced with a number of hurdles, including:

- Outdated e-commerce and business practices, which are in need of updating and implementation prior to the end of the holiday shipping season. This legislation particularly benefits small businesses and consumers by raising the de minimis amount from USD\$200 to USD\$800, reduces paperwork burdens, and facilitates the movement of cargo
- December 24, 2015, the effective date of a measure that if not corrected will cause a WTO compliance issue exposing the U.S. to WTO challenges

- Codification of CBP operations and management must be done while there is a sitting Commissioner of Customs - which may change soon due to the end of the current Administration
- Ensuring swift and successful implementation of Trade Facilitation measures such as ACE/ITDS, (the U.S. single window)
- The U.S. election cycle could complicate Congressional activity in 2016, further delaying vital and time sensitive Reauthorization measures

In closing, the undersigned organizations, representing businesses, and professional firms and services from all sectors of the U.S. economy, reiterate our support for the positive movement this week on the Trade Facilitation and Customs bill. With the divergent versions of the bill in Conference, we believe this will ensure prompt resolution of remaining differences, allowing the bill to move quickly through the process and secure passage by Congress next week.

Sincerely,

Airforwarders Association
 American Apparel & Footwear Association
 American Association of Exporters and Importers
 American Chemistry Council
 American Petroleum Institute
 American Trucking Association
 BACM
 Canadian / American Border Trade Alliance
 Cargo Airline Association
 Coalition of Services Industries
 CompTia
 Express Delivery and Logistics Association
 Fashion Accessories Shippers Association
 Footwear Distributors & Retailers of America
 Foreign Trade Association
 Gemini Shippers Association
 National Association of Foreign-Trade Zones
 National Foreign Trade Council
 National Retail Federation
 Travel Goods Association
 U.S. Fashion Industry Association
 United States Council for International Business

CC:

House Conferees:

Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX)
 Rep. Sandy Levin (D-MI)
 Rep. Pat Tiberi (R-OH)
 Rep. Dave Reichert (R-WA)
 Rep. Linda Sánchez (D-CA)

Senate Conferees:

Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA)
 Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR)
 Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY)
 Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)
 Sen. Oren Hatch (R-UT)
 Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)
 Sen. John Thune (R-SD)

Members of the Senate Committee on Finance
 Members of the House Committee on Ways and Means