

December 18, 2012

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned, represent U.S. producers, processors, and exporters of livestock, poultry, and products of these animals. International trade is increasingly important to the vitality and sustainability of American agriculture, with animal agriculture contributing about one-third of the positive trade balance. We are concerned with the likelihood of a major strike at container ports from Maine to Texas. With the current labor contract between the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the U.S. Maritime Alliance (USMX) set to expire on December 29, the threat of a strike is escalating despite the efforts of a federal mediator. A prolonged strike at the nation's busiest eastern and southern ports would have a devastating impact on the U.S. economy.

U.S. exports of beef, pork, poultry and lamb products surpassed \$16 billion in 2011 and the meat processing industry employs over 500,000 people. Clearly, maintaining exports is vital to strength and long-term viability of the entire U.S. economy.

We know there are tough issues that have yet to be resolved during these negotiations, but it is critically important for the American economy that the two parties remain at the table until a new deal is finalized. The most recent negotiations ended on December 12 without reaching a final agreement, and the two parties have been negotiating a new contract on and off since April making little progress. A strike of any kind at ports along the East and Gulf Coast could prove devastating for the U.S. economy, particularly considering the economic setback suffered by the ports, especially the Port of New York/New Jersey, as a result of super storm Sandy. We call upon you to use all means necessary, including Taft-Hartley, to keep the two sides at the negotiating table and head off a coast-wide strike.

The recently resolved 8-day strike at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach has impacted importers, exporters and other transportation industries that depend on the ports. While the full impact of this disruption is still being calculated, one only needs to look at the 10-day lockout in 2002 that shut down all of the West Coast ports to see what kind of impact a coast-wide strike could have. According to economists, the 2002 lockout led to lingering supply chain disruptions and cost the U.S. economy \$1 billion for each day of the lockout. It took over six months for the ports and retailers' supply chains to completely recover. The 2002 shutdown had a profound impact on the retailers, importers, manufacturers, agricultural exporters, transportation providers and other affiliated industries that rely on the ports every day, and we anticipate that an extended strike along the East and Gulf Coast could have a greater impact considering the fragile state of the U.S. economy.

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We cannot afford further supply chain disruptions as we enter 2013. The two sides must remain at the negotiating table until a deal is reached. We fully believe the two sides can reach an agreement that will ensure the continued competitiveness of these ports for the foreseeable future. At this point, however, we believe that a strike will only be averted through immediate intervention by the administration. Allowing a strike to occur for even one day could have a negative impact on all of those downstream businesses and employees who rely on the ports. The U.S. economy cannot afford to wait for a strike to occur before we see administration action. We urge you to get engaged now with these parties to ensure a strike does not occur.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



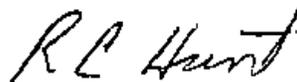
J. Patrick Boyle
President and CEO
American Meat Institute



J.D. Alexander
President
National Cattlemen's Beef Association



Michael J. Brown
President
National Chicken Council



RC Hunt
President
National Pork Producers Council



Philip M. Seng
President & CEO
U.S. Meat Export Federation



Barry J. Carpenter
Chief Executive Officer
North American Meat Association

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James H. Sumner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

James H. Sumner
President
USA Poultry and Egg Export Council

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joel Brandenberger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Joel Brandenberger
President
National Turkey Federation