

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 14, 2017

The Honorable Robert E. Lighthizer
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

As you continue to re-negotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), we urge you to seek strong, enforceable labor standards that raise wages in Mexico and reduce incentives for offshoring; encourage domestic investment; and support well-paying American jobs.

Irrespective of its overall impact, NAFTA has displaced nearly 850,000 American workers, while trade deficits, in general, have cost the U.S. economy 5 million manufacturing jobs. For every one of those workers, and for their families, NAFTA produced a potentially wrenching, life-altering change. In turn, those changes have greatly affected surrounding communities – especially in places where the local economy was built on manufacturing.

As you know, these trends are ongoing. For example, since 2014 Mondelēz International has increasingly shifted production work from the United States to Mexico, where wages are far lower and labor standards weaker. This change has destroyed roughly a thousand middle class jobs at facilities across the country; one plant, in Philadelphia, has closed entirely. Five other facilities, and roughly 1,800 jobs, remain directly at risk. In turn, those facilities and positions support up to 7,000 additional jobs in the surrounding communities.

Preserving U.S.-based, livable-wage jobs is critical to the long-term health of both the American middle class and our broader economy. Cities like Richmond, VA; Atlanta, GA; Fairlawn, NJ; Chicago, IL; and Portland, OR – all of which host Mondelēz production facilities – can ill afford further offshoring. Yet, current policies incentivize that outcome.

We know that the American worker can compete with anyone in the world – but that competition needs to be fair. NAFTA re-negotiations offer a unique opportunity to help create the level playing field that Americans need and deserve. In your opening remarks at the first round of re-negotiations, you stated that the United States “cannot ignore ... the lost manufacturing jobs, the businesses that have closed or moved because of incentives – intended or not – in the current agreement.” Changing those incentives should be a key priority as negotiations continue.

Your effort to re-negotiate NAFTA can only be considered successful if the new agreement creates strong standards that prevent employers in other countries from exploiting and underpaying workers or cutting corners in ways that our own laws forbid – and if you show the will to enforce those standards. We are confident that these changes and continued action will prevent future outsourcing, bring back jobs, lift wages, and strengthen the middle class – to the lasting benefit of our economy and our country.

As always, thank you for your attention to our concerns on this grave matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

John Lewis
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell Jr

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

Daniel Lipinski

Daniel W. Lipinski
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress