

May 8, 2013

Denis McDonough  
Chief of Staff  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. McDonough:

The undersigned food and agricultural organizations represent virtually every component of the \$141 billion in annual U.S. agricultural exports.

We are writing to express our deep concern over reports that the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) is considering closing the agency entirely for a number of normal working days between the end of May and September 30. We seriously question the wisdom of shutting the doors of an agency on days when the rest of the world is engaged in trade negotiations, activities at the World Trade Organization and elsewhere, or potentially adopting measures that are adverse to our trade interests.

We suggest that another agency absorb the costs of the Interagency Trade Enforcement Center (ITEC), which can free resources for USTR and enable it to continue working continually on behalf of U.S. trade interests. Further, we suggest that, if there must be furloughs, a better approach would be to stagger the furlough days among staff members, as other agencies are in fact doing, so that critical U.S. trade interests may be adequately safeguarded. Those interests cover all parts of the globe and account for \$386 million of trade each day. Ignorance of or inaction on a trade matter not only could affect that trade but could also seriously compromise the president's initiative to double U.S. exports.

We urge you to reconsider this approach and adopt a system that will better allow USTR to fulfill its duties in the trade arena.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Feed Industry Association  
American Meat Institute  
American Peanut Council  
American Peanut Product Manufacturers, Inc.  
American Soybean Association  
Animal Health Institute  
California Cherry Export Association  
California Pear Growers

California Poultry Federation  
California Tomato Farmers  
Corn Refiners Association  
Distilled Spirits Council of the United States  
Georgia Poultry Federation  
National Barley Growers Association  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
National Chicken Council  
National Confectioners Association  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Grain and Feed Association  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Oilseed Processors Association  
National Pork Producers Council  
National Renderers Association  
National Sunflower Association  
National Turkey Federation  
North American Export Grain Association  
North American Meat Association  
North Carolina Poultry Federation  
Pet Food Institute  
Sweetener Users Association  
U.S. Dairy Export Council  
U.S. Grains Council  
US Canola Association  
USA Poultry & Egg Export Council  
USA Rice Federation

cc: Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Director of the Office of Management and Budget  
Chairman Max Baucus, Senate Finance Committee  
Ranking Member Orrin Hatch, Senate Finance Committee  
Chairman Dave Camp, House Ways & Means Committee  
Ranking Member Sander Levin, House Ways & Means Committee