

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 10, 2016

The Honorable Michael Froman
United States Trade Representative
Executive Office of the President
600 17th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20508

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Ambassador Froman and Secretary Vilsack,

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to advance America's economic relationship with the globe. We write today to underscore the importance of the geographic indicators (GIs) negotiating objective included in the *Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015*, better known as "Trade Promotion Authority" (TPA), to small farmers and producers in our home state of Connecticut. Two years ago the House and Senate joined together and sent a strong message about the European Union's (EU) use of geographical indications and their potential to negatively impact U.S. companies. In Connecticut this continues to be a significant issue of concern for our agricultural sector and as negotiating rounds continue this month, we would like to underscore this earlier message.

As you are well aware, the EU is advocating for the inclusion of far-reaching GIs provisions as part of a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) agreement. While all TTIP parties share the laudable goal of reducing regulatory differences and tackling barriers to free trade, efforts within these talks by the EU to establish additional GI protections for a variety of products including various dairy, wine and meat products risk flying directly in the face of this objective.

As such, we seek to underscore the importance of language included in TPA that directs negotiators to prevent the use of improper GI protections. Moreover, U.S. focus on this topic should remain on tackling barriers to our companies' abilities to export these types of products both to Europe and around the world, not on making it more difficult for companies to compete on a level playing field.

The economic impact on American dairy farmers and cheese producers of a trade deal that included expansive GI protections for cheeses would be great. The U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC) estimates that top geographic indicators being discussed represent 14% of U.S. cheese production, an economic value of \$4.2 billion a year. Furthermore, \$21 billion in U.S. cheese production already uses European-origin names.

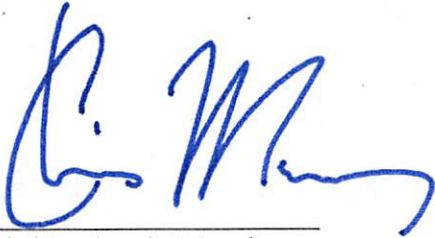
The potential for restrictions on common food names also poses concerns for other food and agricultural sectors, particularly America's wine and meat industries. The wine industry supported the successfully negotiated U.S.-EU Wine Agreement, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this spring, yet despite that agreement the EU has continued to advocate for

eradicating long-standing U.S. usage of several common wine terms. Similarly, the meat sector has expressed concerns about the ways in which GI provisions may evolve over time or be interpreted by export markets in ways that could limit the potential for U.S. products by restricting the use of commonly used meat names such as bologna or black forest ham.

GI provisions in the EU FTAs are already creating escalating threats to U.S. exports to a variety of foreign markets. TTIP's focus must be on tackling those real-world trade challenges not on assisting the EU in its efforts to hamper competition from U.S. suppliers or create favorable protection schemes designed to uniquely benefit EU companies. Cheeses made in our home state of Connecticut are equally as good those made in Europe; we would argue that in many cases they're even better.

Thank you for your continued consideration of this important issue and for your agencies' extensive work to combat restrictions on the U.S. use of common food names that threaten to limit markets for American-made products.

Sincerely,



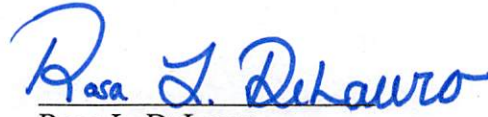
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



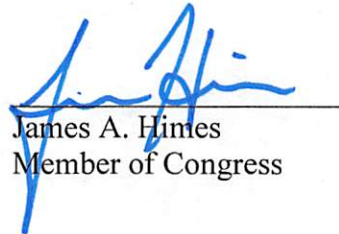
John B. Larson
Member of Congress



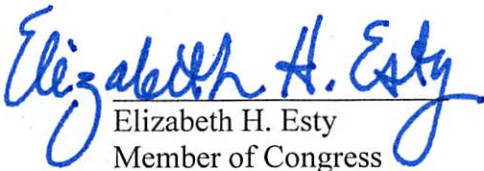
Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



James A. Himes
Member of Congress



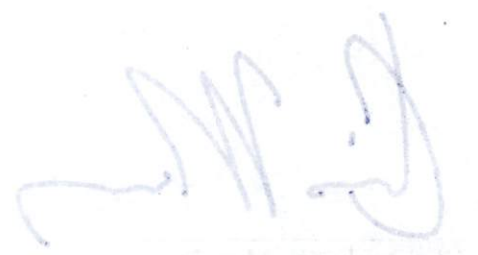
Elizabeth H. Esty
Member of Congress


Additional funding for the program is being sought from the state and private sources. The program is currently in the planning stages and will be implemented in the near future. The program will provide a significant benefit to the community and will be a major step in the development of a more modern and efficient transportation system.


The program is being implemented in a phased manner. The first phase will be completed by the end of the year. The second phase will be completed by the end of the next year. The program will be a major step in the development of a more modern and efficient transportation system. The program will provide a significant benefit to the community and will be a major step in the development of a more modern and efficient transportation system.


Thank you for your continued support and interest in this program. We are confident that the program will be a major step in the development of a more modern and efficient transportation system. We are confident that the program will be a major step in the development of a more modern and efficient transportation system.


Robert J. [Name]
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