

THE PRESIDENT'S EXPORT COUNCIL

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20230

June 29, 2023

President of the United States of America
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We fully agree with the notion that “trade can—and should—be a force for good.”¹ Among other laudable goals identified by your Administration, trade policy should seek to grow the middle class, raise living standards, and ensure full employment.² Border authorities have dual roles—protecting the safety and security of citizens while also facilitating legitimate trade. To further these goals, we believe that the U.S. government should launch a new, interagency strategy to coordinate all efforts to promote trade facilitation abroad.

The primary beneficiaries of such an effort are U.S. exporters and their workers. One recent economic study demonstrates the profound effects in the United States of improving border processes in U.S. export markets. By significantly reducing the time and money spent by these U.S. businesses, more streamlined customs processes in other countries could save \$88 billion in export costs and create almost 1 million new jobs in the United States.³ These new jobs would benefit every state in the nation with the vast majority of the new workers hired by U.S. small businesses.⁴ The Council also believes that trade facilitation is a critical component of the work your Administration is doing to alleviate bottlenecks and other constraints in key supply chains.⁵

We support and urge the United States to continue various initiatives to improve trade facilitation. Here at home, the U.S. government is often at the forefront of new and innovative ideas to enhance our own customs administration. The United States also leads abroad, including at international organizations such as the World Customs Organization (WCO) and World Trade Organization (WTO). For example, multiple U.S. agencies have helped to implement the WTO’s Trade Facilitation Agreement through public-private partnerships and other means. Furthermore, modern U.S. trade agreements such as the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) contain high-standard and enforceable rules that form the foundation of a modern customs system, including important disciplines that govern how customs authorities expedite the release of goods, employ risk management principles, combat corruption at the border, and communicate with traders.

Against this backdrop, the Council recommends that you issue a new Executive Order, Presidential Memorandum, or similar directive to prioritize and coordinate trade facilitation

¹ UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE, 2023 TRADE POLICY AGENDA AND 2022 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES ON THE TRADE AGREEMENTS PROGRAM 1 (March 2023).

² *Id.*

³ THIRD WAY, REDUCING THE RED TAPE AROUND SUPPLY CHAINS (July 25, 2022).

⁴ *Id.*


⁵ *See, e.g.,* Executive Order 14017 on America’s Supply Chains (February 24, 2021).

efforts, including relevant supply chain initiatives, across all federal agencies. With the goal of achieving durable results in U.S. export markets, this strategy would establish trade facilitation as a key U.S. economic goal and set specific priorities across all U.S. trade and other international economic initiatives. This includes implementing existing agreements and programs as well as guiding agencies negotiating future agreements and programs such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity and the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity. These priorities should include the continued digitization of customs procedures – a promising goal that disproportionately benefits small traders, including U.S. exporters that do not have the time and money to devote to the outdated and more resource-intensive paper-based process. In order to achieve the benefits to U.S. workers outlined above, trade facilitation provisions should be binding, enforceable, and implementable by our trading partners.

The Council also believes that this strategy should reassess and refine, as necessary, existing Executive Branch governance structures setting the various roles and responsibilities across all relevant agencies, including how to promote U.S. trade facilitation priorities at WCO, WTO, and other relevant international organizations. In addition, the strategy should coordinate all the various technical assistance and capability building efforts of the U.S. government, sharpening the focus on trade facilitation concepts that are implementable and maximize the benefits to U.S. small businesses and their workers along the lines laid out in this recommendation. Finally, to ensure lasting success, the strategy should contain a mechanism for recurring feedback, outside of cleared advisors, from the private sector, civil society, workers, academia, and other interested U.S. stakeholders.

The Council applauds your Administration's work in these areas to date and urges you to elevate them further by adopting the recommendations set forth in this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ME', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Mark Ein