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May 10, 2011

Ambassador Ron Kirk
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

CC: Asst. USTR Stan McCoy
All Members, House Committee on Ways and Means

Re: Intellectual Property Protections in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement

Dear Ambassador Kirk,

As negotiations continue on the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, I urge you to support strong protections for America's intellectual property that parallels U.S. levels of protection, specifically in the area of patent protection.

The United States' economy revolves significantly around businesses related to intellectual property. IP intensive industries drive this economy to the tune of \$5-5.5 trillion, accounting for over half of all U.S. exports, and employing nearly 18 million workers. These are high wage jobs that are ensured and protected due to IP protections that allow for stability in the industry.

The pharmaceutical industry, in particular relies on strong IP protections. The US currently has one of the strongest and fastest growing biotech and pharmaceutical industries in the world. Weakening of IP rights not only is detrimental to the economy, but also puts the public's health and safety at risk. Drugs being researched and manufactured today have been proven effective against life threatening diseases like cancer, multiple sclerosis and diabetes due to reliable patent laws that encourage innovation. Research and development is very expensive, and companies need to have an incentive to keep inventing life-saving drugs. Any trade agreement negotiated by the United States must include an IP chapter that provides for an adequate data protection period in order for research companies to recoup the costs of research and development.

The rest of the world looks to the U.S. as a model for property rights protections and we should continue to require strong IP provisions as a key part of negotiating free trade agreements. Intellectual property rights can boost trade and foreign direct investment not only in the U.S. but in the developing world as well. The United States needs to send a clear message to our trading partners that we are serious about protecting our creators and innovators and at the same time promoting prosperity around the world. On behalf of the property rights community, we thank you for your leadership on this issue and look forward to your continued efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelsey Zahourek".

Kelsey Zahourek
Executive Director
