

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

October 28, 2015

The Honorable Michael Froman
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20002

Dear Ambassador Froman:

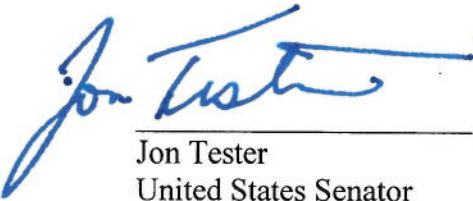
We write today regarding the recent expiration of the Softwood Lumber Agreement (SLA) between the United States and Canada. While the SLA played an important role in balancing trade between the two countries, we believe its expiration presents an opportunity to negotiate a stronger agreement that will provide certainty for mills and consumers on both sides of the border. Failure to do so will undoubtedly have a negative impact on our economy as well as our nation's vital relationship with Canada. With that in mind, we urge you to continue to engage with Canada and domestic stakeholders and to prioritize the completion of a new agreement.

Montana's lumber mills play a critical role in our state's economy, however, current lumber market conditions along with the shortage and high costs of raw materials are threatening the viability of the industry. Many of our mills are operating well below full capacity and several mills recently eliminated a total of 235 strong middle-class jobs, which is a significant number of jobs in Montana. This reduction at the mills has a broader negative impact, threatening local economies in rural America, from the wood products industry to various service industries. The expiration of the SLA and the resulting 12-month trade remedy standstill will likely lead to even more difficult market conditions and possibly more layoffs or closures.


We believe that a new negotiated agreement that takes current market conditions into account is the best path forward. The 2006 SLA helped level the playing field over the last decade. However, modifications to the 2006 SLA are necessary to respond to changes in the lumber market and to ensure that our domestic producers are able to compete fairly.

We know we share an interest in ensuring that American mills and their employees are treated fairly and appreciate your attention to this matter. We appreciate your ongoing work on behalf of Montana and U.S. lumber producers, and we stand ready to assist you in securing a new agreement in a timely manner.

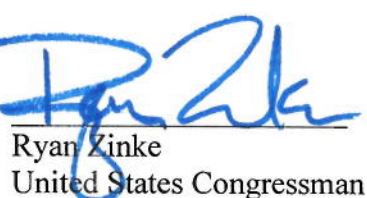
Sincerely,



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Steve Daines
United States Senator



Ryan Zinke
United States Congressman