

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 23, 2014

Ambassador Michael B. G. Froman
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Froman:

Thank you for your letter dated September 11, 2014. Your response, while insightful and apparently addressing labor rights standards with Vietnam, did little to dissuade our concern that sufficient human rights and religious freedom provisions will be included in any final Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement.

As mentioned in our letter to President Obama dated July 29, 2014, Vietnam's imprisonment of prisoners of conscience, including political dissidents and religious minorities, is cause for concern as your office negotiates the TPP with Vietnam. In your response letter to us, you wrote that the "Obama Administration has also been clear in its insistence that TPP must include strong, enforceable protections for workers." How does this reply address the concern, as expressed in our original letter, about Vietnam's brutal crackdown on human rights advocates and people of faith? Despite the fact that the Vietnamese government has released a number of political prisoners in recent months, at least an equal number of dissidents have been detained or sentenced to prison terms over this same period of time. For this reason, we remain troubled that the Vietnamese government continues to abuse its power with those who dare to speak against its rules and policies.

In reference to "meaningful progress on human rights," you stated that the Administration is "committed to seizing that opportunity." Can you describe the specific action(s) that your office is taking to fulfill that statement in regards to the ongoing TPP negotiations, particularly to address our concerns regarding human rights and religious freedom in Vietnam? In July, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or of Belief conducted a 11-day visit to Vietnam. In a press statement in Hanoi he decried that "serious violations of freedom of religion or belief are a reality in Viet Nam – in particular, but not only, in rural areas." He added that "the relevant legal documents of Viet Nam give Government agencies broad space to regulate, limit, restrict or forbid the exercise of freedom of religion or belief." The Special Rapporteur's assessment of the country's current condition of religious prosecution validates our assertion that Decree 92 of the Ordinance on Religion and Belief was specifically designed to control people of faith and suppress their religious activities. We are worried that you did not address our concern in our letter pertaining to Decree 92 of the Vietnamese government.

At a time when the U.S. government has just lifted the embargo of lethal weapon sales to Vietnam – an embargo that was imposed primarily due to the country's poor human rights record


– it is imperative that your office further press the Vietnamese government to demonstrate an institutional improvement in its human rights practices as the TPP reaches its final rounds of negotiation to mirror a growing U.S.-Vietnam bilateral relationship.

We appreciate your taking the time to address our concerns in a way that helps to ensure confidence for the U.S. Congress to support a TPP agreement with Vietnam in regards to human rights and religious freedom. We look forward to hearing from you again.

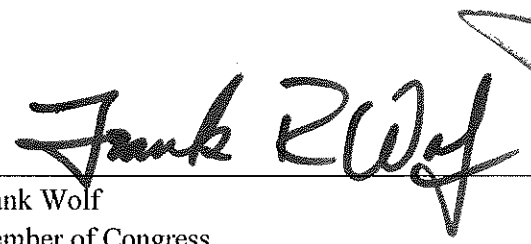
Sincerely,



James Lankford
Member of Congress



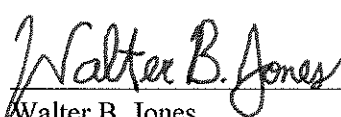
Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



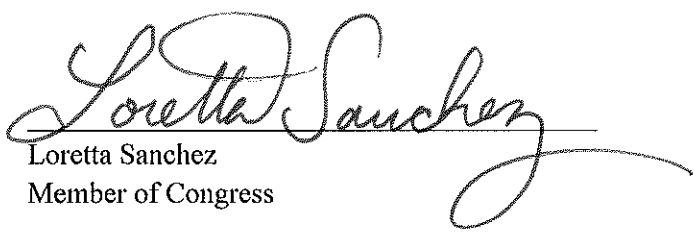
Frank Wolf
Member of Congress




James P. McGovern
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Dana Rohrabacher
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