Coalition for U.S.-Russia Trade

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September 21, 2012

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. President, Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader Pelosi, and Minority Leader McConnell:

The undersigned leading associations of the Coalition for U.S.-Russia Trade would like to underscore that action is vital this year to enact legislation extending Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) with Russia. We strongly urge the White House and Congress to work together to ensure passage of this legislation as quickly as possible after the November elections. There is strong bipartisan support for this measure, which will support U.S. exports, U.S. jobs and the U.S. economy.

Russia entered the World Trade Organization (WTO) on August 22nd. However, because of outdated, decades-old legislation, every WTO member – except the United States – has the ability to defend its rights in the Russian market and to enforce Russia's WTO commitments. Without PNTR, U.S. firms, farmers and their workers cannot take full advantage of Russia's WTO obligations related to market-opening measures and transparency. Also out of the United States' reach are many of the key provisions of Russia's WTO accession -- such as Russia's adherence to the rules of the international trading system with respect to intellectual property rights; science- and risk-based regulation for animal and plant health; and liberalizations in services. Without PNTR, the United States has been relegated to the sidelines of Russia's market. We do not have full access to rights and benefits, and, importantly, our firms are at a disadvantage in the pursuit of commercial contracts.

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Enactment of PNTR with Russia is a critical legislative priority of our organizations this year. Inaction will cost U.S. farmers, manufacturers and service providers substantial opportunities for growth in Russia's market, the 9th largest economy in the world and a key emerging market. PNTR benefits the United States, not Russia. Further delay in its passage will hurt U.S. interests and is not an option.

We, therefore, urge you to register support for expanding opportunities for U.S. business, farmers and workers by supporting PNTR with Russia as soon as possible in the November legislative session.

Respectfully,

American Farm Bureau Federation

Business Roundtable

Coalition of Service Industries

Emergency Committee for American Trade

National Association of Manufacturers

National Foreign Trade Council

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

U.S. Council for International Business

U.S.-Russia Business Council