

**The full CWA letter, from Legislative Director Shane Larson, is pasted below:**

December 10, 2015

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 700,000 members and officers of the Communications Workers of America (CWA), I am writing to strongly urge you to vote no on the Conference Report on H.R. 644 when it comes before the House this week. While CWA is strongly supportive of efforts to combat unfair trade practices, this bill is unfortunately far too weak to do so effectively and is littered with troubling provisions that will actually hinder efforts to formulate a better trade policy that benefits American workers.

The conference report strips language that was included in the Senate-passed version of H.R. 644 that would have allowed for the application of countervailing duties to address currency manipulation. This issue is critical to American workers, as estimates by the Economic Policy Institute indicate that stopping currency manipulation could create as many as 5.8 million American jobs. Instead of the strong CVD language included in the Senate bill, the conference report contains alternate language that is preposterously weak and will make little improvement over existing currency policy.

The currency language directs the Treasury Department to take action that it deems to be "appropriate"--without direction on how to judge appropriateness--unless Treasury makes a self-determination that doing so would not benefit the economic or national security interests of the U.S.--again, without providing any criteria on which to base those assessments. The strongest tool that the bill offers to the President to punish manipulators--banning the manipulator from federal procurement opportunities--is prohibited if the President determines that doing so would subject the government "to unreasonable cost," while, once again, not defining what an unreasonable cost is. In sum, the bill offers inadequate enforcement tools that can be easily waived by the executive branch at any of several steps in the process. Given Treasury's long history under both Democratic and Republican administrations of failing to combat currency manipulation, this provision is simply lip service designed to distract from the fact that the meaningful CVD provisions included in the original Senate bill have been stripped out.

Also alarming is Sec. 914(e) of the conference report, which would allow countries on Tier 3 of the State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report to be part of agreements that are "fast tracked" subject to the provisions of H.R. 2146 passed earlier this year. This language would make it much easier for countries with atrocious records of human trafficking, such as Thailand, to join trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership before we have seen sustained evidence that their governments are improving their efforts. Indeed, U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Glyn Davies has already said that the U.S. "would welcome [Thailand] with open arms" to the TPP, despite Thailand's Tier 3 Ranking on this year's TIP Report.

The trafficking language is also alarming in what it says about the U.S.'s commitment to the labor provisions of the TPP and other trade agreements. Every U.S. FTA since 2007 has included language banning the use of compulsory or forced labor and requiring the effective abolition of child labor. It is facially obvious that a country that is not complying with the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and is not making significant efforts to do so, as is true of all Tier 3 countries, would not be in compliance with those labor protections. So, allowing a Tier 3 country to be admitted to a trade agreement with those terms demonstrates that enforcement of those labor protections is not a priority.

The aforementioned issues represent only the beginning of the problems with the conference report on H.R. 644. Sec. 914 of the report also contains language that would make it much more difficult to address climate change or protect migrant workers' rights in our trade agreements. It is deeply disappointing that the report contains these harmful provisions and lacks important provisions on currency, since the ENFORCE Act and the elimination of the notorious "consumptive demand exception" for goods made with forced labor are important provisions whose passage is long overdue.

CWA is deeply disappointed that the conference committee did not develop a bill that would benefit American workers and put us on a path to a better trade policy. Again, we urge you to vote no on H.R. 644. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Shane Larson  
Legislative Director  
Communications Workers of America (CWA)

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