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July 5, 2007

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Rangel  
Chairman, Ways and Means Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sander Levin  
Chairman, Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madam Speaker, Majority Leader Hoyer, Chairman Rangel and Chairman Levin:

On behalf of the thousands of U.S. farmers and ranchers that raise cattle and who are members of the Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, United Stockgrowers of America (R-CALF USA), thank you for your courageous decision to reject the renewal of fast track authority.

The U.S. cattle industry is the single largest segment of American Agriculture and is vitally important to the economic well-being of Rural America and America as a whole. It is the largest producer of beef in the world and unique in that it has not produced sufficient volumes of beef to satisfy domestic consumption for at least the past 40 years. It is unique also because its participants do not receive government price supports for their cattle – cattle producers continue to derive their income from the marketplace.

R-CALF USA members have long understood the need to address the unique marketing characteristics of the U.S. cattle industry in trade agreements. However, they realized also that U.S. trade negotiators were neither knowledgeable of, nor inclined to include, adequate rules, safeguards, and definitions of origin in trade agreements. For this reason, R-CALF USA has strongly opposed fast track authority, opting instead for our elected Members of Congress to retain their authority to amend specific provisions within trade agreements that would place the U.S. cattle industry at a competitive disadvantage.

The U.S. cattle industry is presently in a state of contraction. It is experiencing an exodus of independent producers, a reduction of its herd size, and a reduction in output – the volume of beef produced from cattle wholly of U.S. origin fell to a 10-year low in 2005. Failed trade policies have contributed greatly to this unfavorable state.

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We have formally requested that the U. S. Trade Representative (USTR) office include several provisions necessary to protect the integrity of the U.S. cattle industry in the free trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, and South Korea. Our requests have gone unheeded.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that the U.S. cattle industry remains competitive in both the domestic and global markets, and again, we express our sincere appreciation for your leadership in taking the crucial step of restoring Congress' authority to amend trade agreements. Please feel free to contact me or Bill Bullard, the CEO of our organization, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. M. Thornsberry" followed by a small mark that appears to be "DVM".

R. M. Thornsberry, D.V.M.

President, R-CALF USA Board of Directors

Cc: Members of U.S. House of Representatives