

April 27, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable Mitchell McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Mr. Speaker, Mr. Leader, Madam Pelosi, and Senator Reid:

The United States has led the world into an era of unprecedented peace and prosperity since World War II. As part of that effort, presidents of both political parties have provided strong leadership to strengthen trade and our economic ties with foreign partners throughout the world. The recently concluded Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement is an important step in the process of furthering peace and increasing prosperity here in America and around the globe. The TPP will deepen relationships with allies in the Asia-Pacific region, strengthen the U.S. economy, establish high standards that mirror U.S. interests and values, and contribute to a safer world for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren.

Engagement and leadership on international trade are fundamental to U.S. national security. That is a truth recognized by every president since the end of the Second World War. President Harry Truman said, “peace, freedom, and world trade are inseparable.” President John F. Kennedy stated that, “the success of our foreign policy depends in large measure upon the success of our foreign trade,” while President Ronald Reagan noted that, “the freer the flow of world trade, the stronger the tides for human progress and peace among nations.”

As former secretaries of defense, we not only agree with our past presidents, we also agree that our engagement and leadership in Asia is especially critical. In fact, no region will impact American prosperity and security more in the coming century. By 2030, two-thirds of the world’s middle class—more than 3 billion people—will reside in Asia. This population not only represents a critical consumer base for Made-in-America exports, but an opportunity to strengthen alliances with regional powers such as Japan and Singapore.

The TPP represents a choice for the United States. It is a choice between leading the world toward a future that supports U.S. values and interests, or standing back and allowing others—most likely China—to write the rules of the

road for Asia in the 21st century. And let us be clear: trade rules written by China would not promote a trading system consistent with American interests and values.

The United States cannot and should not fall behind on the world stage. Our leadership in a troubled world is dependent on our military, diplomatic, and economic power. We cannot afford to weaken any element of our strength at this critical time. With a trade agreement of this magnitude, there will be elements that some dislike, but the overall benefits to our economy and national security cannot be overstated. We urge you to support the TPP and to help the United States maintain its leadership in the 21st century.

Sincerely,

Harold Brown
Former Secretary of Defense (1977–1981)

Frank C. Carlucci
Former Secretary of Defense (1987–1989)

William J. Perry
Former Secretary of Defense (1994–1997)

William S. Cohen
Former Secretary of Defense (1997–2001)

Donald H. Rumsfeld
Former Secretary of Defense (1975–1977, 2001–2006)

Robert M. Gates
Former Secretary of Defense (2006–2011)

Leon E. Panetta
Former Secretary of Defense (2011–2013)

Charles T. Hagel
Former Secretary of Defense (2013–2015)