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Remarks on Signing the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015

February 24, 2016

Well, trade is a major topic of debate here in the United States and around the world. One area where there should be no debate is that once we've set up trade rules, people have to abide by them. We can't have other countries cheating. We can't have other countries engaged in practices that disadvantage American workers and American businesses.

One of the things I've very proud of is that we have ramped up enforcement of our trade laws to protect American workers and American businesses like never before. In areas like steel, for example, we've brought more cases than we had in the previous decade. We've brought more cases before the World Trade Organization, the WTO, than any other administration. And the ones that we've brought, we have won. In fact, we just won a case against India this week.

And so it is timely, then, for us to be signing this bipartisan customs bill, because it's an important milestone in our trade agenda. I want to thank all the Members of Congress who stand behind me here and worked on this diligently. It was a hard piece of business, but what it does is it helps us enforce our trade agreements by providing more resources for enforcement, by streamlining the process whereby we can bring an action if a country is illegally dumping goods or involved in countervailing duties. It makes sure that these other countries are playing by the rules, and it gives us more personnel to do it as well.

I also want to thank Senator Bennet in particular, because he gives us new tools—the provision that he helped to craft in this legislation gives us new tools to deal with currency devaluations that are designed to undercut U.S. goods, U.S. exports, and our balance of trade. This strengthens our ability to penalize countries that fail to live up to their obligations. And overall, this is an example of smart trade policy in the 21st century.

We are not going to be able to close our borders. The global supply chain is deeply embedded in everything we do, and our exports produce jobs for Americans in every State that typically pay higher than nonexport jobs. So we want to trade. And we've got the best workers, we've got the best businesses, we make the best products and provide the best services. In order for us to make sure, though, that we're getting the benefits of trade, we've got to have these enforcement tools, and this legislation helps us accomplish this.

So I want to thank all of you for the great work that you have done. And I expect our Customs and Border patrol—which just brought some additional cases today with respect to steel—I expect them to use these tools wisely to make sure that we're getting the job done. All right?

And with that, I'm going to sign the bill.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

There you go. Thank you very much, everybody. Good job.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:49 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. H.R. 644, approved February 24, was assigned Public Law No. 114–125.

Categories: Bill Signings and Vetoes : Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015, signing remarks.

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