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The Honorable Chris Coleman
St. Paul, MN

Co-Chair
The Honorable Belinda Constant
Gretna, LA

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The Honorable Dave Kleis
St. Cloud, MN

The Honorable Tim Kabat
La Crosse, WI

The Honorable Roy Buol
Dubuque, IA

The Honorable Harry Rediger
Cape Girardeau, MO

The Honorable Brent Walker
Alton, IL

The Honorable David Lattus
Hickman, KY

The Honorable Jay Hollowell
Helena-West Helena, AR

The Honorable Jim Strickland
Memphis, TN

The Honorable Bill Luckett
Clarksdale, MS

The Honorable Paxton Branch
Tallulah, LA

Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative

Effort of the Mayors along the River
America's Inland Coast 2017



May 31, 2017

The Honorable Gary D. Cohn
Asst. to the President for Economic Policy
Director, National Economic Council
Executive Office of the President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable George Sifakis
Director, Office of Public Liaison
Executive Office of the President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Cohn and Mr. Sifakis:

We write to you with the utmost urgency imploring your assistance in maximizing American competitiveness for export of our commodities. **The United States remaining a signatory in good standing to the Paris Agreement preserves low-cost access of our commodities to foreign markets.**

Mayors, business executives, and representatives of the agricultural industry stand united in ensuring our trade surplus remains. The Mississippi River Basin is the most agriculturally productive zone on Earth supplying more commodities trade by volume than any other river basin in the world. This trade status is made possible through unfettered access to international markets that may close to us or become prohibitively expensive to retain our surplus standing.

Commodities from the Mississippi River Valley Make Possible a Trade Surplus

Waterways and ports in the Mississippi River ten-state corridor move \$164.6 billion in agricultural products to U.S. and foreign markets. The vast majority of this volume is for export. 55 to 70 percent of all U.S. exported corn, soy, and wheat move on the Mississippi River, majority of which is exported creating a trade surplus for the nation.

The Mississippi River has the largest global trade footprint of any inland waterway in North America giving it a significant stake in maintaining access to global commodity markets. As the signatories to the Paris Agreement move to implement their plans under the Agreement, the Mississippi River Valley has a large and tangible interest in the United States maintaining its seat at the table to keep markets open to U.S. products and services. .

Protective Tax Structures Will Impede our Exports

If we do not adhere to the Agreement, the rest of the countries who have agreed and maintain this agreement will be moving forward unilaterally with carbon pricing through taxes or trading systems designed to increase the cost of U.S. exports. The U.S. will not be at the negotiating table for how high these taxes will be, or what the structure will look like once imposed. We will simply be subject to the decisions of these countries until such time as the WTO makes a final review.

Our Supply Chain Advantages are Tied to the Fate of the Agreement

The United States will miss out on the majority of the investment opportunities arising from the Paris Agreement and carbon emission reduction planning; 96% of countries have submitted national climate plans, putting global business operations, supply chains and investment portfolios in the same international policy framework for the first time. If we remove ourselves from this framework, we will be behind on international economic trading platforms and put our own economy behind the growth curve.

The waterway transports more than 60 percent of America's corn and soybean exports and 40 percent of the nation's total agricultural output. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce the waterways and ports of the ten-state Mississippi River Corridor alone provide over 500,000 jobs generating \$83.6 billion in annual revenue.

Bottom Line - we must do all we can to bolster American competitiveness and maximize our exports.

Very Sincerely,

Chris Coleman, Mayor of St. Paul, MN, *MRCTI Co-Chair*

Belinda Constant, Mayor of Gretna, LA, *MRCTI Co-Chair*

Roy Buol, Mayor of Dubuque, IA, *MRCTI Treasurer and Immediate Past Co-Chair*

David Lattus, Mayor of Hickman, KY, *MRCTI Secretary*

Tim Kabat, Mayor of La Crosse, WI

Russell Loven, Mayor of Guttenberg, IA

Brant Walker, Mayor of Alton, IL

Harry Rediger, Mayor of Cape Girardeau, MO

Jay Hollowell, Mayor of Helena-West Helena, AR

Bill Lockett, Mayor of Clarksdale, MS

George Flaggs, Mayor of Vicksburg, MS

Paxton Branch, Mayor of Tallulah, LA

Darryl Grennell, Mayor of Natchez, MS

cc:

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Office of the Secretary, United States Department of State

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.

Secretary of Commerce

Office of the Secretary, United States Department of Commerce