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Larsen: TPA Is Right For Pacific Northwest Economy

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, Rep. Rick Larsen, WA-02, announced his support for the 2015 Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) bill. Larsen said he intends to vote for the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 because of the critical role trade plays in creating jobs and growing the economy in the Second Congressional District and Washington state.

“Over the last several months, people across Northwest Washington have shared their perspectives with me about why I should or should not support TPA. I have met with stakeholders across the spectrum on this issue, from labor and environmental groups to local businesses and foreign leaders. And I have carefully tracked the bill as it has moved through the legislative process.

“TPA is a cornerstone of the President’s trade agenda. It is the vehicle for Congress to set standards and goals for new trade agreements the President is seeking to finalize. I believe presidents should have the authority to negotiate trade agreements based on Congressional direction. The specifics of that direction are important, and they are laid out in the 2015 TPA bill.

“I have decided to support the 2015 TPA bill because [trade matters for the Second Congressional District and for Washington state](#).

“Trade matters for manufacturers of all sizes in the Second Congressional District. Opening up new markets for our businesses to sell their goods and services is a key way to help them grow their operations and create jobs here at home. We have manufacturers of all sizes in my district that trade with other countries, supporting more than 68,320 jobs. That is a sizeable piece of our economy that we simply cannot ignore. Trade matters for these factories and workers.

“Trade matters for a variety of industries in Washington state, from agriculture to electronics to tourism. In Washington state, about 40 percent of all jobs are tied to trade in some way, and the pay for these jobs is nearly 20 percent higher than the average annual wage. Our state exported more than \$90 billion in goods and services in 2014, making us the largest exporting state per capita in the country.

“I agree with [a comment Secretary John Kerry made](#) during his recent visit to the Boeing factory

in Renton. He said our state is a trade leader because we discovered a long time ago that it is in our best interest to do business with the world. Helping our state's businesses sell their products in new markets worldwide means more growth, jobs and opportunity in the Pacific Northwest. Trade matters for a healthy economy in Washington state.

"I also believe that the 2015 TPA bill [addresses the major concerns](#) I have heard from people in Northwest Washington and is far stronger than the last comparable bill in 2002. Three main concerns I have heard are protecting our workers and the environment, transparency, and the fact that Congress cannot amend trade agreements when they come up for a vote.

"In terms of protections for workers and the environment, I strongly believe any trade agreements the U.S. makes with other countries must uphold these core values. The 2015 TPA bill puts these values front and center in the administration's trade negotiations by requiring trading partners to put in place and enforce labor and environmental standards. If our partners do not live up to their end of the deal, they will be sanctioned. The 2002 TPA law did not include any of these teeth.

"People must be able to understand what is in a trade deal to trust that negotiators are making decisions in favor of our workers, our environment and our economy. That is why I am pleased the 2015 TPA bill takes several steps to give the public more access to information about trade agreements. One measure would create a position in the administration dedicated solely to improving public access to trade agreement information. The 2002 TPA bill included no such transparency requirements.

"Finally, some have expressed frustration that the 2015 TPA bill does not create a mechanism for Congress to amend trade agreements when they come to the floor for a vote. I think there are other mechanisms in the 2015 TPA bill that give Congress necessary oversight to hold the administration accountable. TPA contains an off-switch. If Congress is not satisfied the administration is upholding our core values to protect workers and the environment, then Members can vote to make an agreement ineligible for TPA.

"Trade matters for jobs and a healthy economy in our state. Trade agreements should open up new markets for our businesses to sell their goods overseas so they can grow and create jobs here at home. Trade agreements also should level the playing field for our workers while upholding labor and environmental protections we have worked so hard in this country to achieve. The 2015 TPA bill moves us forward on both of these goals," Larsen said.

The 2015 TPA bill has support from newspaper editorial boards in the Pacific Northwest:

- In a [recent editorial](#), the Everett Herald calls for the President to have the authority to negotiate trade deals: "But President Obama's fast-track authority should be approved so that he and his trade representatives, working within Congress' stated limits, can make a deal that promotes the state's and nation's economy and protects our interests."
- An [editorial from the Tacoma News Tribune](#) notes that trade is critical to Washington state's economy: "If you live in Washington, your community depends on international trade. ... As the fight over proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership heats up in Congress, Washington's congressional representatives should make sure they stand with the real economic interests of their constituents. That translates into support for fast-track negotiating authority for President Obama, without which he can't finalize this potentially rich trade deal with 11 other Pacific Rim nations."
- Washington state and the U.S. have a lot to gain from leading on international trade, [according to the Seattle Times](#): "Two out of five Washington workers have a job related to international trade. As more countries enter the global marketplace, Washington has much to gain — or lose — if the United States doesn't maintain a strong position in trade. That's just one of many reasons why Congress should grant President Obama "fast-track" authority to negotiate trade agreements known as trade-promotion authority."

The Senate passed the TPA bill on May 22, with support from Washington state's senators. The House is expected to take up the bill in early June.

Contact Congressman Larsen

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