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JANICE MAYE,
MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL

July 16, 2001

Dear Ambassador Zoellick:

Last year, the United States and Vietnam took an important step toward strengthening economic relations between our countries with the conclusion on July 17, 2000, of the U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA). The trade agreement will provide new opportunities for trade and investment that can benefit workers, businesses and farmers in both countries. We are hopeful that the Committees and the Congress will act before the August recess to approve the agreement, and are working toward that goal with our colleagues in the House and Senate.

Since the BTA was signed last year, we have been working to ensure that as we move forward in strengthening the U.S.-Vietnam economic relationship, we also move forward to advance the issue of labor standards in Vietnam. Vietnam has taken some steps in that regard, including by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on labor issues with the United States last November. However, more should be done.

To that end, we urge the Administration to include a positive incentives labor provision in the eventual U.S.-Vietnam bilateral textile and apparel agreement. This approach would provide incentives for Vietnam to take additional, concrete measures to strengthen adherence to core labor rights and would reward Vietnam with tangible, commercial benefits as it continues to strengthen labor standards.

We encourage the Administration to make clear its intent to pursue a labor provision in the textile and apparel agreement as the BTA resolution moves through the Congress. We know that a number of Members of Congress share our belief that addressing these concerns will strengthen the bipartisan support necessary for prompt congressional approval of the BTA, and represents positive action on trade legislation.

Integral to this approach is the need to provide additional technical assistance to the Government of Vietnam to achieve its objectives in the area of labor rights. The United States, through the Department of Labor, has already committed both funding and personnel to assist Vietnam in implementing the MOU, and we stand ready to ensure that additional resources are made available to assist Vietnam in implementing commitments that would be made under the bilateral textile and apparel agreement.

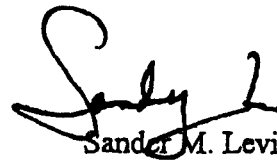
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We look forward to working with you in the coming weeks to ensure expeditious passage of the BTA, and to build a positive, productive relationship with Vietnam that benefits the people of both countries.

Sincerely,



Charles B. Rangel
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means



Sander M. Levin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Trade



Max Baucus
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee