



# AFL-CIO

March 8, 2017

Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman, Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services  
Education and Related Agencies  
Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services  
Education and Related Agencies  
Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We are writing in our capacities as the presidents of the most representative employer and worker associations in the United States. The United States Council for International Business (USCIB) has a multi-industry corporate membership that generates annual revenues of \$5 trillion globally and employs 11.5 million people around the world. The AFL-CIO is the umbrella federation for U.S. unions, representing 55 affiliate unions and 12.5 million working women and men. The purpose of this letter is to communicate the shared interest of business and labor in retaining the leadership of the United States in promoting worker rights globally—an objective essential to bolstering our economy at home.

Specifically, we are writing to support continued funding for the Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) and the Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL)—two federal department bureaus essential for ensuring compliance with our current trade law and a level playing field for businesses operating both in the U.S. and globally. The programs and grants of ILAB and DRL are critical to both employers and workers. They provide essential support to efforts of U.S. companies and worker organizations to promote worker rights abroad, uphold labor commitments in free trade agreements (FTAs), eliminate forced labor and child labor, and create an enabling environment for ethical business practices. Any reduction in funding would force U.S. companies to expend more resources on private compliance efforts, which would be rendered less effective without the capacity-building or compliance incentives for national governments provided by these bureaus.

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We have direct experience working with both of these bureaus. We serve on the President's Committee on the International Labor Organization (ILO) and our organizations participate in the Tripartite Advisory Panel on International Labor Standards (TAPILS). We are also represented on the Department of Labor's National Committee on Labor Provisions in Free Trade Agreements. Through such bodies, we work closely with the U.S. government to enforce labor rights globally and thus mitigate operational challenges for U.S. corporations seeking to uphold these rights consistent with U.S. law and policy.

Reducing or eliminating the funding for ILAB or DRL would significantly undermine the ongoing efforts to strengthen the capacity and commitments of our developing market trading partners to meet our high standards for labor protections. Ensuring that our FTA partner governments and governments everywhere uphold U.S. and international labor standards makes for more stable and inclusive economies, thus creating markets for U.S. exports, creating good jobs at home, and making it more likely that imports consumed by U.S. consumers are made consistent with American values. These standards are central to both protecting American workers and also the reputations of our leading corporations.

Over the past twenty years, there has been bipartisan support for labor-related trade capacity programs to ensure compliance with our current trade law and to support a level playing field for businesses. Cutting ILAB's funding will make it substantially harder, if not impossible, for the Department of Labor to carry out its mandate to achieve the objectives established by our trade laws. Another core function of ILAB—its annual country reports on child labor and forced labor—would be undermined if it were made powerless to provide strategic grants to organizations capable of working to improve conditions where problems are identified.

In order to further achieve these objectives, the mandate of the Office of International Labor Affairs (ILA) within DRL must also be preserved. The ILA, under the direction of DRL's Special Representative for International Labor Affairs, helps to coordinate and support the work of Labor Officers and other staff covering labor issues in U.S. missions throughout the world. The Special Representative for International Labor Affairs and the ILA office further serves as liaison for the global labor movement, multinational companies, and other stakeholders, and coordinates funding for projects that advance worker rights in supply chains, build the capacity of independent unions, and promote dialogue among workers, employers, and governments.

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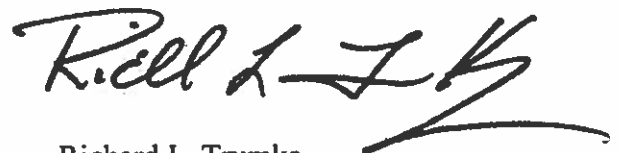
Reducing funding for DRL and ILAB would weaken the U.S. government's ability to manage complex global problems and allow for the deterioration of labor conditions globally. In light of their strategic importance and the promotion of our national values, we urge you to preserve existing DRL funding and fully fund ILAB's grant-making ability in the 2017 and 2018 budget. We are at your disposal should you wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,



Peter M. Robinson  
President and CEO  
U.S. Council for International Business



Richard L. Trumka  
President  
AFL-CIO

cc: Committee Members