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[Letter to POTUS from Bill Archer re: Fast Track] [loose]

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# Facsimile Cover Sheet

To: Al Maldon

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From: Timothy M. Reif  
Democratic Chief Trade Counsel  
Committee on Ways and Means

Phone: 202-225-4021

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Pages including this  
cover page: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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**September 29, 1998**

**JANICE HAYS, MINORITY CHIEF COUNSEL**

Bill Archer  
Chairman

## Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 2, 1998

Hon. Bill Archer  
Chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means  
1102 Longworth  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Archer:

Until last Friday, no Congress had ever affirmatively denied an American President the traditional fast track authority to negotiate trade agreements on behalf of the nation. The support of only 151 members from your party -- far short of the predicted total of 180 -- made it painfully evident that Republicans calculated a greater political benefit from holding a vote and losing than negotiating a fast track that would pass.

We write to you today as Democrats supportive of the principle of granting the President traditional fast track trade negotiating authority. However, we are resigned to the fact that no fast track will win passage until a fair and bi-partisan bill, which can garner significant support from both sides of the aisle, is negotiated. Until new and bi-partisan legislation is advanced, America will continue to be marginalized in world trade negotiations.

Your recent letter to President Clinton only serves to perpetuate an approach to trade that leads to defeat: schedule a vote before a reasonable framework for a bi-partisan majority is discussed, then attempt to force members to comply. While you rightly ask for the President's assistance in passing fast track, we strongly believe it is premature to contemplate setting any specific date for a vote before Members of Congress have negotiated even the framework of a bill. Furthermore, it is clear that in order for any such negotiations to be fruitful, provisions related to labor and the environment must be included in any bill which stands a chance at final passage.

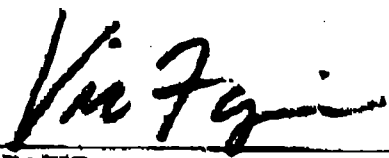
Mr. Chairman, we look forward to working in a bi-partisan manner to secure fast track. However, it is clear that no amount of finger-pointing will make fast track a reality. We urge you to take the necessary steps to convince your caucus that trade should not continue down the slippery slope of partisanship and that reasonable changes must be made in order to pass this important legislation.

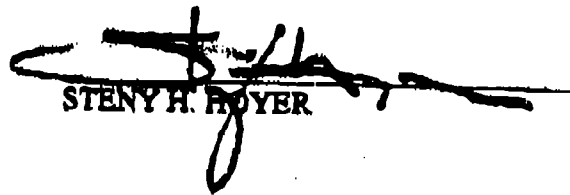
Sincerely,

  
ROBERT T. MATSUI

  
NORMAN D. DICKS

Hon. Bill Archer  
Page 2

  
VIC FAZIO

  
STENY H. HOYER

  
BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

**Statement by the President on  
House Vote on Fast Track**

At a time of global financial turmoil, we should be working together to build a new bipartisan international economic policy that strengthens America's competitive edge. Renewing traditional authority is the right thing to do, but now was clearly the wrong time to vote on it.

The House of Representatives should focus its energies on making sure that the International Monetary Fund is strong enough to confront the financial crisis that threatens our economy today. That legislation has strong bipartisan support in the Senate, but has become entangled in politics in the House. Strengthening the IMF is the single most important thing we can do now to protect American farmers, ranchers, and workers who depend on exports to make a living.

At a time when we need to forge a new consensus on trade, Congress has chosen partisanship over progress. To move our trade policy forward this year, Congress still has time to enact important legislation from the Africa trade legislation to the global shipbuilding treaty and the Caribbean Basin Initiative. And when Congress returns next year, we should do the hard work of building a bipartisan coalition for traditional negotiating authority so that we can build on our successful record of expanding markets for American goods, services, and agricultural exports.