WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter, Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee today announced that she has reintroduced legislation that would level the playing field for American workers by requiring that foreign market barriers be eliminated before any further U.S. tariffs are reduced.

Slaughter has reintroduced the Reciprocal Market Access Act, H.R.1749, bipartisan legislation which instructs U.S. trade negotiators to eliminate foreign market barriers before reducing U.S. tariffs and provide enforcement authority to reinstate the tariff if the foreign government does not honor its commitment to remove its barriers. This legislation would also instruct the International Trade Commission to conduct an assessment of the impact of a prospective trade agreement on market opportunities and barriers for U.S. products or services that will be impacted by the trade agreement.

**“The U.S. is already the most open market in the global economy but current trading laws do not require the same level of openness from our trading partners. *Trade agreements must be mutually beneficial agreements.*
Unless other governments provide the same level of access for American companies and remove their regulations that stop U.S. products from being sold in their countries, then the U.S. should not disarm and drop our tariffs,” said Slaughter who is considered one of Washington’s leaders on fair trade issues. “American businesses face export barriers in other countries while we open our doors to other nation’s imports. Fundamentally, this is an issue of fairness for hard-working Americans and for their counterparts abroad.”**

With 36 original co-sponsors, the bipartisan legislation already enjoys more support in this Congress than it did in the last.

Slaughter has long been considered one of the leaders on fair trade issues. Representing Upstate New York , she is particularly concerned with the need to rebuild America’s manufacturing base.

“Many of the jobs we lost are not coming back,” said Slaughter. “It’s my belief that you can’t be a superpower if you don’t make anything and right now America is at a disadvantage. I’m looking to change that. The sad fact is that unfair trade agreements like NAFTA, and Permanent Most-Favored Trading Status with China – both of which I

voted against by the way – leave our nation open and vulnerable to outsourcing and limit U.S. companies ability to compete. As a result, we in Upstate New York, have seen a steady stream of jobs leaving our communities – leaving empty warehouses, a struggling middle class, and a depressed economy behind. Unilateral disarmament in the face of foreign protectionist practices is unacceptable, and we must ensure that our trade negotiators do not undermine our industries and our workers."

The Reciprocal Market Access Act has been supported by the Alliance of American Manufacturing, Corning, Inc, The United Steel Workers, United Auto Workers, AFL-CIO, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and the American Manufacturing Trade Action Coalition (AMTAC).

For more on Slaughter's work to protect American workers and end unfair labor practices, click here.

Background: Securing Reciprocal Market Access for U.S. Manufacturers

The U.S. industry faces significant non-tariff barriers ("NTBs") in key markets, preventing fair market access. These NTBs (see below) deny U.S. manufacturers current and future export opportunities. Eliminating the U.S. tariffs without securing elimination of NTBs is equivalent to unilateral disarmament – giving full advantage to our competitors, while allowing them to protect their home markets.

Under the current Doha negotiation process, tariff and non-tariff barriers are largely separate and self-contained, meaning that tradeoffs are tariff-for-tariff and non-tariff-for-non-tariff. The tariff cutting negotiation process does not provide the United States Trade Representative (USTR) the flexibility needed to exclude sectors that do not receive mutually beneficial trade concessions. As a result, a tariff can be reduced or eliminated without securing the elimination of the real barrier or barriers that deny market access to U.S. manufacturers' exports. This compartmentalization can undermine the limited leverage the U.S. has to secure market access. It is essential that we obtain meaningful market access in key markets. Without meaningful access, confidence in U.S. trade policy will continue to erode.

To enhance the tools available to our negotiators ensuring that the U.S. is able to achieve real reciprocity, the bipartisan Reciprocal Market Access Act was first introduced in 2007. It was reintroduced in the 111th Congress, and a companion bill, S.1766, was introduced by Senators Sherrod Brown and Kay R. Hagan. This legislation provides additional leverage for USTR and is designed to ensure that negotiations fully address the market access problems faced by U.S. producers.

Summary of the Reciprocal Market Access Act, H.R. 1749

- The legislation is designed to ensure that our trade negotiations achieve real and meaningful market access for our producers.
- Authority to receive or eliminate tariffs in trade agreements is tied to achieving meaningful market access for U.S. domestic producers that have identified and worked with the U.S. government to address those barriers.
- To better ensure meaningful market access, the bill requires that the President provide a certification to the Congress in advance of agreeing to a modification of any existing duty on any product, that sectoral reciprocal market access has been obtained.
- This will enhance the partnership with Congress and achieve reciprocal market access.
- It gives the government the automatic negotiated right to revoke concessions to cut tariffs if our trading partners don’t implement the commitments they made to open up their markets.

- This authority, known as “snap back” authority, could be triggered by a private sector or Congressional request. The goal – and the result – will be reciprocal market access for our nation’s products.
- Instructs the International Trade Commission to conduct an assessment of the impact of a prospective trade agreement on market opportunities and barriers for U.S. products or services that will be impacted by the trade agreement. This report will be submitted to Congress, USTR, and the Commerce Department no later than 45 days prior to the beginning of negotiations.

Resources:

[Full text of the Reciprocal Market Access Act]