

Crapo Statement at Nomination Hearing for U.S. Trade Representative
February 25, 2021

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, delivered the following remarks at a hearing to consider the nomination of Katherine Tai to be the United States Trade Representative.

The text of Ranking Member Crapo's remarks, as prepared, is below.

“Thank you Mr. Chairman. Ms. Tai, welcome, and congratulations on your nomination.

“The U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) is a very important position, where today's decisions will be felt for years to come.

“A successful trade policy means more high paying jobs. We need these jobs more than ever if we are to emerge from this pandemic stronger than before.

“I know the importance of free trade very well. Idaho exports over \$4 billion in goods annually, including \$1.7 billion in computer and electronics products.

“Remarkably, 85 percent of Idaho's exporters are businesses that employ fewer than 500 people. We cannot forget that.

“Free trade does not just strengthen the powerful; it empowers all Americans, including those running and working in smaller businesses.

“It does so for a simple reason: we sell high quality goods and services that people around the world want.

“We do not need to be intimidated by foreign competitors. Our market is already one of the most open in the world. Our problem is not about whether to open our market further, it is, in fact, that too many foreign markets remain closed to us.

“History demonstrates repeatedly that Americans do very well in foreign markets, if only given the chance – the chance to participate in an environment of fair trade.

“For example, bringing down just some of Japan's agricultural barriers in the 'US-Japan Phase 1' deal increased Idaho's agricultural exports by over a third.

“The importance of fair trade, and the price of it being denied, is also well understood by the people of Idaho.

“Idaho is home to Micron Technology – a global leader in semiconductor technology. Chinese state-owned companies stole Micron's trade secrets in order to secure an unfair advantage.

“China’s systematic theft of American innovation has been estimated to cost the United States nearly half a trillion dollars each year.

“Idaho’s softwood lumber producers face an uneven playing field against subsidized Canadian exports. We cannot let the 750,000 jobs in the lumber industry or the 420 million acres of family-owned timberlands be threatened by unfair subsidies.

“Idaho’s world famous potatoes cannot be shipped more than 16 miles south of the Mexican border because of protectionism disguised as a safety measure.

“Potato farms, including Cranney Farms in Oakley, Idaho, gave away millions of potatoes last year because domestic customers dried up as a result of the pandemic.

“Put plainly, the United States does not just lose potential opportunities when its leaders fail to engage appropriately on trade. Our businesses and workers lose ground here at home, in every state.

“This is why the United States needs an effective USTR to tear down trade barriers and confront abusive trade practices.

“President Biden has nominated someone with extensive trade policy experience, including experience litigating major trade disputes against China.

“I look forward to hearing more from you, Ms. Tai, regarding how you would use your experience to engage the numerous challenges facing the United States, if confirmed as USTR.

“Your experience no matter how extensive will go to waste if the Biden Administration’s approach to trade policy ends up being a ‘time out,’ as some officials have suggested.

“In particular, I am referencing statements by Administration officials who have asserted that the President will not sign any new trade agreements until he sees his domestic priorities achieved, including strengthening ‘Buy American’ requirements in government purchasing.

“Ms. Tai, you must make the president understand that trade is a domestic priority for hundreds of millions of Americans.

“I am happy to discuss ‘Buying American.’ However, our businesses and workers are ready to ‘Sell American’ to all foreign customers—right now.

“While often said, it is worth repeating: most of the world’s customers are outside of U.S. borders. Americans deserve to sell their products and need access to that huge foreign marketplace.

“Our businesses need that access more than ever because other countries are not standing still.

“The United Kingdom is the fifth largest economy in the world. And, the UK is taking advantage of its newfound freedom from EU restrictions to aggressively negotiate its own new trade deals.

“Our special political relationship with the UK must now be complemented with a special economic relationship that will increase employment and output on both sides of the Atlantic.

“It is not just our allies that are moving forward. Other countries are taking steps that may push us back even further if the United States is seen as standing still and not negotiating trade deals.

“Notably, China is moving forward with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership or ‘RCEP.’

“It is arguably the largest free trade agreement in the world. Yet, the RCEP has weak rules on intellectual property and on protecting foreign investment.

“And, the RCEP has no rules whatsoever on state-owned enterprises, labor rights or environmental protection.

“If the Biden Administration wants a ‘worker-centered’ trade policy as it claims it does, then our USTR should ensure that the international trading regime strongly reflects American values rather than those of China’s government.

“In short, the need for an energetic and effective trade policy is more compelling than ever.

“I expect Ms. Tai will well demonstrate in today’s hearing that she has the requisite skillset to deliver as much. But, the question is whether she will have the President’s support to do so? I hope for America’s sake, that she will.

“Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing today. I look forward to hearing from Ms. Tai.”

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