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CONTACT: [Aaron Fobes](#) , [Julia Lawless](#)

(202) 224-4515

Hatch Statement at Customs Conference Meeting

WASHINGTON – Today, during the Senate and House conference committee meeting on H.R. 644, the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015, Senate Finance Committee Chairman and conferee Chair Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) delivered the following statement:

It is my honor to chair this public meeting of the conferees on H.R. 644, the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act.

As we all know, over the past decade, conference committee meetings like this have been pretty rare around here. But, as we continue to get back work and once again make Congress a more productive place, these types of meetings should be more and more common.

While this public meeting is incredibly important, the conference committee work on this Customs bill has actually been ongoing ever since the Senate and House passed their respective bills this summer.

I am pleased to say that these months of work has enabled us to narrow our differences and reach significant areas of agreement and I am confident that we'll be able to close out the remaining issues and reach a favorable outcome.

Should we succeed in putting together and passing a bipartisan conference report on the Customs bill, it will be the fourth major trade bill to be signed into law this Congress. That's a pretty impressive accomplishment, if you ask me. And it is only been possible due to the huge efforts undertaken by members of both parties and in both chambers.

Of course, we are not there yet – that's why we're here today.

Each member of the conference committee will have a few minutes to give brief opening remarks if they so choose, but I would like to first take just a moment to thank all of you and your staffs for your diligent efforts in getting us this far.

This bill has been a long time in the making, but throughout the process, our goals have been the same: to reauthorize the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency and to help facilitate and streamline the flow of legitimate trade across our borders.

If all goes well, the final package will include a number of provisions that improve the enforcement of U.S. trade laws, including strong tools to prevent evasion of antidumping and countervailing duties.

I am also committed to making sure that the conference report contains strong new protections for U.S. intellectual property rights and new tools to identify and address currency manipulation.

Additionally, I hope that the conference report will include provisions to strengthen Trade Promotion Authority, advance U.S.-Israel ties, and provide additional trade preferences to help Nepal recover from the devastating earthquake that took place earlier this year.

I also hope that we will be able to include a new process to consider Miscellaneous Tariff Bills or, at a minimum, define a clear path forward on that important issue.

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