

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

October 12, 2021

The Honorable Katherine Tai  
United States Trade Representative  
600 17<sup>th</sup> St. NW  
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Tai,

We write today to bring immediate attention to the growing influence and intensified engagement of China in Latin America and Caribbean trade and economic relations.

The United States cannot afford to stand by and ignore the fact that we are no longer the primary trading and commercial partner with all South American countries, except Ecuador and Colombia. China is already beginning to discuss new trade agreements with South American countries. For example, Ecuador and China hope to have a free trade agreement as early as March 2022, and Uruguay even sooner – by the end of the year.

While the U.S. continues to maintain being the primary trading partner with our Central American and Caribbean neighbors, heightened Chinese economic engagement with our neighbors is equally as concerning. Since 2019, China agreed to invest in several major infrastructure projects in El Salvador, including a soccer stadium and a water treatment plant. In 2007, China financed a soccer stadium in Costa Rica. China has also engaged in “vaccine diplomacy”, selling, donating, and exchanging millions of (albeit, less-effective) vaccines to struggling nations, advancing Beijing’s regional footprint. The U.S. should be gravely concerned with the influence and leverage this buys them, as high risk CCP backed companies are working to dominate 5G and the public security space.

As you know, trade and economic relationships with sovereign nations is reserved for all nations of the world, should they choose to engage in them. As you also know, these relationships can yield political influence, diplomatic ties, technological advancement, infrastructure investment and business and financial strategies. Trading relationships truly can be multi-faceted. This is what we know, and this is definitely what China knows as well.

Economic prosperity and solidified trading relationships is slowly becoming a matter of national security. We understand concerns regarding human rights, rule of law, labor, and environmental issues in our neighboring countries, but China is no stranger to these same concerns, and yet we have continued to engage and trade with Beijing. Surely these concerning issues can be addressed while congruently investing, trading, and near-shoring job opportunities with likeminded Western Hemisphere nations.

Officials from countries such as Ecuador, Uruguay, Colombia, Paraguay, Guatemala, and others have stated that they wish to continue strong trading relationships with the U.S. Now is the time to turn dialogue into action. We can no longer waste time trying to fix this situation solely diplomatically. China has the money, influence, and strategy to infiltrate the Western Hemisphere – it is only a matter of time before the checks become too large to turn down.

We believe that it is of the highest priority for the U.S. to keep its relationships strong with our neighbors in the Western Hemisphere. Before long, China will be significantly positioned to completely dominate Western Hemisphere economics, as China is already the top trading partner for practically all of Asia, Oceania, Eastern Europe, Africa, and, as stated, most of South America.

Latin America and the Caribbean should never live as an unnoticed shadow of the United States. A strong hemisphere economically benefits all. We understand the shortcomings and difficulties that the pandemic has had on the world, but as we emerge from the pandemic to economically recover, we do not want to leave our Latin American and Caribbean friends behind. Otherwise, they will begin to look elsewhere, and leave us behind.

Sincerely,

Eric A. "Rick" Crawford  
Member of Congress

Gary Palmer  
Chairman, Republican Policy Committee

John Katko  
Member of Congress

Patrick McHenry  
Member of Congress

Mark Green  
Member of Congress

Chris Stewart  
Member of Congress

Randy Weber  
Member of Congress

Bill Johnson  
Member of Congress

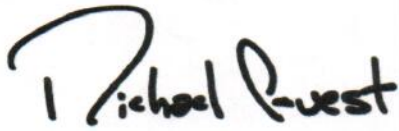




Maria Elvira Salazar  
Member of Congress



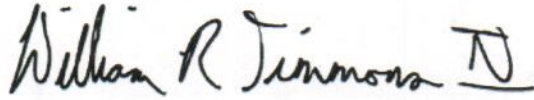
Peter Meijer  
Member of Congress



Michael Guest  
Member of Congress



Louie Gohmert  
Member of Congress



William Timmons  
Member of Congress