

January 22, 2019

Open Letter to Congress: Reject the Reciprocal Trade Act

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing millions of Americans, we urge you to reject the recently introduced Reciprocal Trade Act.

Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution gives Congress the authority to lay taxes and duties and to regulate commerce with foreign nations. The Reciprocal Trade Act would abandon these responsibilities and give the president unilateral authority to increase taxes on imports without congressional approval.

The Reciprocal Trade Act is unnecessary. Trade Promotion Authority already empowers the president to negotiate trade agreements to submit to Congress for review and approval.

Since World War II, foreign barriers to U.S. exports have declined dramatically through a combination of successful trade negotiations and an increasing understanding by our trading partners that trade barriers are self-destructive.

This bill's proponents suggest it is intended to open foreign markets. In reality, it is more likely to lead to a tit-for-tat retaliatory trade war that closes foreign markets, reversing decades of market-opening progress under U.S. leadership.

We believe the government should pursue the best pro-growth policies for Americans, not weakly copy bad policies from other governments. We further believe that trade policy should make it more difficult to impose harmful tariffs, not less difficult.

Finally, the Act relies on the mistaken notion that trade deficits are "a drag on economic growth," when in reality a trade imbalance means our trading partners are investing in the U.S. economy instead of buying exports. Either way, Americans benefit when trade grows.

The Reciprocal Trade Act would enable the Executive Branch to amass more power over international trade and raise taxes on American consumers and businesses without the important checks and balances established in the Constitution. Members of Congress should not support this legislation and should not abdicate their constitutional role in the regulation of international commerce.

Sincerely,

Pete Sepp, President
National Taxpayers Union



Phil Kerpen, President
American Commitment

Brent Wm. Gardner, Chief Government Affairs Officer
Americans for Prosperity

Grover Norquist, President
Americans for Tax Reform

Norman Singleton, President
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Andrew F. Quinlan, President
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Ryan Ellis, President
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