

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 15, 2026

Secretary Rubio
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We write to express our deep concern regarding reports that the Administration is preparing to withdraw the United States from the International Labor Organization (ILO). Such a decision would undermine the organization's core mission of establishing and promoting international labor standards in the global economy and would be difficult to reconcile with the Administration's stated pro-worker trade agenda. These reports come amid a severe budget crisis at the ILO, which is largely due to the Administration's failure to pay approximately \$300 million in outstanding U.S. membership dues. Unlike most international organizations, the ILO's unique tripartite structure gives governments, workers, and employers the central role of developing international labor standards to combat the global "race to the bottom" that has undermined wages and working conditions here in the United States and around the globe.

The labor standards developed and articulated by the constituents of the ILO underpin the labor provisions in U.S. trade agreements, which require trading partners to adopt, maintain, and effectively enforce labor laws related to eliminating forced labor, child labor, and employment discrimination, while also protecting workers' fundamental right to organize unions and bargain collectively. Such obligations are vital to levelling the playing field by preventing other countries from gaining an unfair advantage through common forms of labor exploitation. But negotiated commitments are only as effective as the institutions that implement them. For decades, the ILO has helped governments put these commitments into practice through technical assistance, training, advisory services, reporting, investigations, and capacity-building support to labor inspectorates.

Several U.S. trading partners have reportedly sought ILO assistance in response to the Administration's recent imposition of Section 301 tariffs on 60 economies for failing to impose or effectively enforce prohibitions on imports produced with forced labor. Other partners have sought to extend ILO programming that is a key U.S. trade condition for access to the U.S. market. Yet, at the same time that the Administration has called on countries to improve labor standards, it is reportedly considering a withdrawal from the very institution that develops those standards and helps governments implement them. Notably, USTR relied on ILO data in conducting these investigations, underscoring the organization's value to U.S. efforts to identify and combat forced labor. If the Administration believes that weak labor standards distort trade and disadvantage American workers and firms, withdrawing from an institution whose standards, research, and expertise it relies upon to address those concerns runs counter to American interests.

The ILO's value extends beyond government enforcement and directly benefits American companies operating in global supply chains. Through programs such as Better Work, a joint initiative of the ILO

and the International Finance Corporation, factories receive auditing, training, and support to improve compliance with national laws and international labor standards. Improved transparency at the factory level enables companies to identify risks in their supply chains, address problems before they become more serious, and avoid reputational damage through responsible sourcing practices. The American Apparel & Footwear Association and other U.S. business organizations recently highlighted the important role of the ILO in strengthening labor enforcement in sourcing countries, addressing forced labor, and maintaining a competitive environment for American companies and workers.¹

The ILO's role in advancing U.S. trade policy is well illustrated in Haiti, where U.S. law ties preferential market access to labor law compliance and integrates the ILO into that statutory framework. In September, Congress reauthorized the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act (HOPE) and the Haiti Economic Lift Program Act (HELP). Under these programs, Haiti is mandated to work with the ILO to implement the Technical Assistance Improvement and Compliance Needs Assessment and Remediation (TAICNAR) program. The ILO's Better Work program in Haiti operates the core compliance component of TAICNAR, conducting factory assessments, supporting remediation, and providing technical assistance to strengthen industrial relations and labor law enforcement. If the ILO is unable to continue performing these functions, Haiti will be unable to meet the labor compliance requirements Congress established as a condition of these trade preferences—programs that continue to enjoy strong bipartisan support.

Finally, the United States withdrawal from the ILO will only serve to expand China's influence at the organization and deprive us of a key forum for holding them accountable for systemic labor rights violations. For example, in 2022 the United States delegation to the ILO's annual conference played a decisive role in rallying support from governments, workers, and employers to condemn China's use of forced labor camps to "re-educate" Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).² A U.S. withdrawal will not halt the development of international labor standards; rather, it will strip American policymakers, workers, and employers of their ability to shape their creation and implementation in a manner that reflects our values. Walking away cedes strategic leverage to a major economic competitor over the very rules that govern fair competition in the global marketplace. This exposure is particularly critical as the ILO facilitates the development of standards for emerging issues, including the platform economy, artificial intelligence, and workplace health and safety. American workers and companies will ultimately be impacted by these international standards, regardless of whether the United States chooses to participate in their creation.

Accordingly, we urge the Administration to maintain full United States membership in the ILO and utilize appropriated Contributions to International Organizations (CIO) funds to expeditiously pay the approximately \$300 million in arrears. Abandoning the ILO does not protect American interests. Instead, it diminishes our ability to enforce trade agreements, taints our supply chains, and hands a strategic victory to our economic competitors. The United States must maintain its seat at the table to ensure that global labor standards are driven by American values, interests, and priorities.

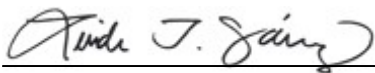
¹https://www.aafaglobal.org/AAFA/AAFA_News/2026_Press_Releases/AAFA_Leads_US_Business_Community_Letter_Urging_ILO_Funding.aspx

²<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/countries-request-ilo-china-mission-probe-alleged-xinjiang-labour-abuses-sources-2022-06-02/>

To assist Congress in monitoring the implementation of U.S. trade policy and funding mandates, please provide comprehensive responses to the following questions by October 30, 2026:

1. Given the Administration's extensive reliance on ILO data to execute recent Section 301 tariff enforcement actions, what concrete steps is the Department of State taking to ensure the ILO remains fully funded and operationally viable so that U.S. trade enforcement mechanisms are not compromised?
2. Because Congress has explicitly tied preferential market access for Haiti to the execution of the TAICNAR program, what immediate actions is the Department taking to ensure that the U.S. remains fully engaged in the ILO framework so as not to jeopardize the legal compliance of these congressional trade preferences?
3. In alignment with the 2025 National Security Strategy's mandate to protect American workers from foreign economic distortion, what is the Department's explicit plan to utilize the United States' permanent seat on the ILO Governing Body to actively counter China's expanding influence over global standard-setting?
4. Out of funds appropriated by Congress under the CIO account for Fiscal Years 2024, 2025, and 2026, what is the exact timeline for the Department to release the necessary funds to clear the outstanding \$300 million in arrears and stabilize U.S. standing and voting rights within the organization?

Sincerely,



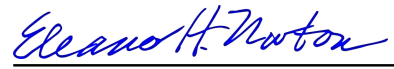
Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



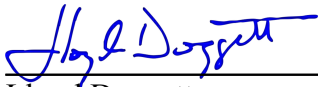
Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



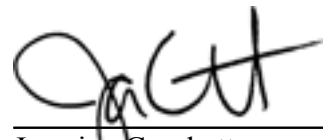
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



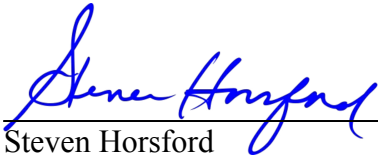
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



Steven Horsford
Member of Congress



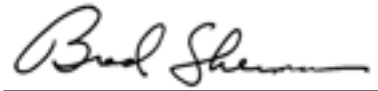
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



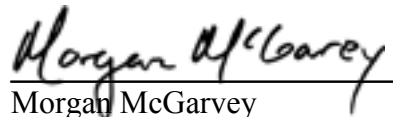
Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress



Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



Morgan McGarvey
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



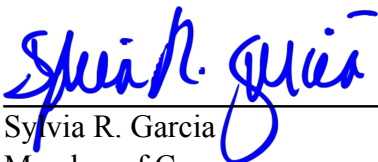
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



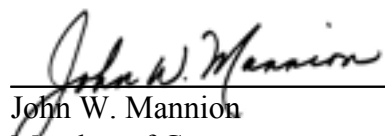
Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



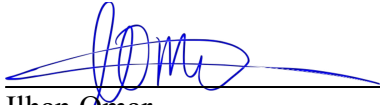
Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



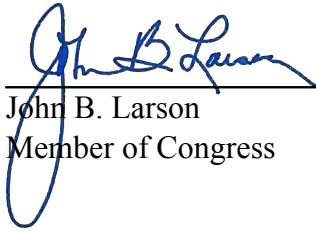
John W. Mannion
Member of Congress



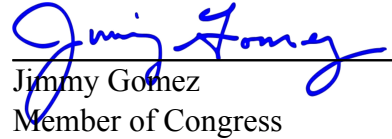
Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



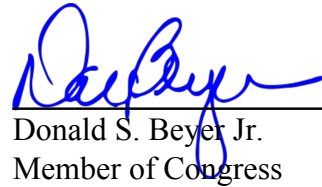
John B. Larson
Member of Congress



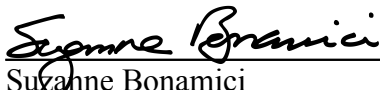
Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



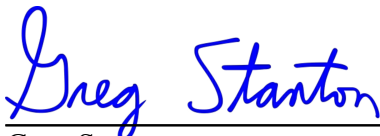
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



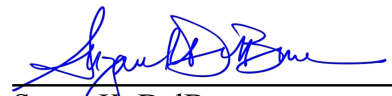
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



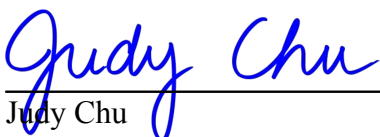
Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



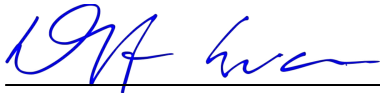
Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



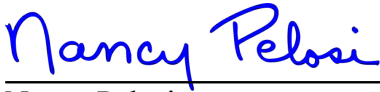
Judy Chu
Member of Congress



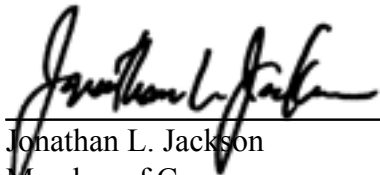
Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



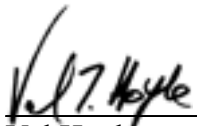
Nancy Pelosi
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



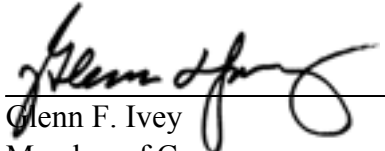
Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



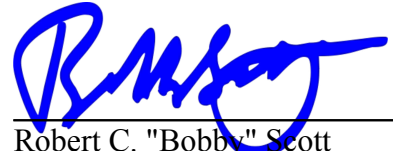
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



Glenn F. Ivey
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



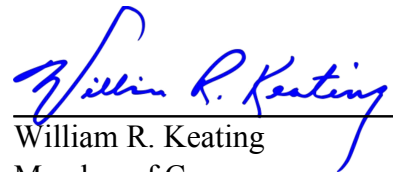
Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress



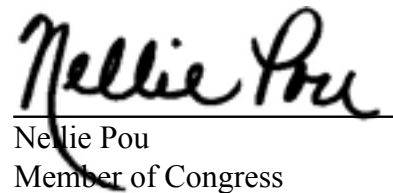
Greg Landsman
Member of Congress



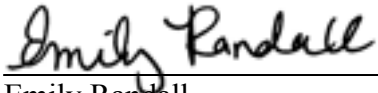
Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



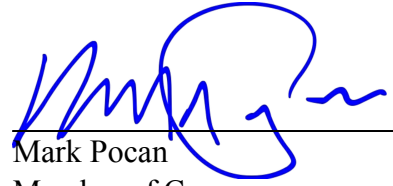
William R. Keating
Member of Congress



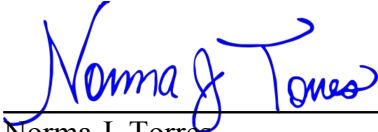
Nellie Pou
Member of Congress



Emily Randall
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



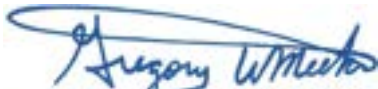
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Richard E. Neal
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

CC: Keith Sonderling, U.S. Secretary of Labor
Jamieson Greer, U.S. Trade Representative