



April 28, 2005

The Hon. Carlos Gutierrez
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
Pennsylvania Ave. & 14th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Gutierrez:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Consumers for World Trade (CWT), I'd like to express our concern about the exclusion of consumer interests in the formulation of U.S. trade policy. CWT is a national, non-profit, non-partisan organization, established in 1978 to promote the consumer interest in international trade and to enhance the public's awareness of the benefits of an open, multilateral trading system to everyone's daily life. CWT is the only consumer group in America whose sole mission is to educate, advocate and mobilize consumers to support trade opening legislation. CWT accomplishes these goals through email campaigns, advocacy on the Hill, monthly events that highlight the consumer impact of current trade policies, and an e-newsletter that we distribute to consumers around the country.

CWT was recently denied advisor status in the Industry Trade Advisory Committee on Consumer Goods (ITAC 4) because we were not deemed to be "a U.S. entity that trades internationally and is engaged in the manufacture of a product or the provision of a service." It is disturbing that the interests and concerns of 296 million American consumers should be dismissed in such a way.

Equally frustrating is the ongoing negotiation between Canada and the U.S. to resolve the softwood lumber dispute. American consumers of lumber have not been included in these negotiations in a meaningful way nor have our economic concerns been given any weight. Thanks to the current duties on lumber imports, an estimated 300,000 low income American families have been priced out of the housing market. Exclusion of consumers from ITAC 4 and lumber negotiations highlights the need to rethink our approach to trade policy formulation. Without consumers there would be no imports or exports, so why should our interests be so utterly dismissed from the equation?

In conclusion, Secretary Gutierrez, we urge you to weigh all interests equally and make choices that reflect the greater national good. All participants in the world trading system – whether they are importers, exporters, producers, or consumers – are equally important and should be treated with equal respect.

Yours truly,

Pamela J. Slater
Executive Director
Consumers for World Trade