

March 2, 2018

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

While we may disagree on many of the decisions made in your Fiscal Year 2019 budget proposal, I want to applaud your proposal to provide robust funding for the International Trade Administration's (ITA) Enforcement and Compliance Business Unit. As I wrote to you in March of last year, investing in our trade enforcement capabilities – and specifically in the ITA's Enforcement and Compliance Business Unit – is critically important to our ability to respond swiftly and decisively when our trading partners violate agreed-upon rules and place American businesses at an unfair disadvantage. As you work to improve the trade enforcement network, I would urge you to ensure that our trade enforcement investments and policies work as well for small businesses as they do for bigger businesses.

For small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) attempting to fight unfair trade practices, enhanced trade enforcement capabilities specifically tailored to their unique needs could be a lifeline. During my time in the Senate, several small businesses from Maine that believed subsidized or dumped imports were causing them material injury approached my office to learn more about the federal trade investigation process. The high cost of pursuing trade relief often prevented them from pursuing the issue.

For those small businesses that did pursue relief, however, the counsel and advice received from the small business assistance offices at the Department of Commerce (DOC) and the International Trade Commission (ITC) proved invaluable. Staff in these offices helped them gather publically available information on foreign producers' data, reviewed draft petitions, and offered informal advice on the applicability of U.S. trade remedy laws. While these offices cannot replace formal legal assistance, they can reduce the burdens and costs on SMEs prior to filing a petition.

According to the DOC performance indicators, ITA staff conducted over 1,000 anti-dumping and countervailing duty petition counseling sessions in 2017 – even though the department had only planned to conduct approximately 298 sessions that year. Since demand from small businesses for trade relief tools is high, I would strongly encourage you to direct Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross to continue to prioritize this section – but not at the expense of other critical resources within or outside of the department.

Increasing funding at America's primary trade enforcement agencies, and making sure that the voices of our small business are well represented at these agencies, is of the utmost importance in a globalized world. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Angus King". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Angus" and the last name "King" clearly distinguishable.

ANGUS S. KING, JR.
United States Senator