

United States Senate

May 17, 2017

17-055826

COMMITTEES
AGRICULTURE
ARMED SERVICES
BUDGET
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

I write today to commend you and President Trump for your initiation of an investigation under section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, with regard to the national security impacts of steel imports into the United States. As you begin your investigation, I urge you to look at the broader ferrous metals and metal casting sectors, and not just primary steel production. The iron industry, in particular, is crucial to our national defense and should be included in your investigation, including representation at the upcoming public hearing on the investigation which will take place on May 24, 2017.

The impact of the iron manufacturing industrial base on national security may be hard to see, but it is undeniable. Iron industry products are inside the vehicles, ships, and weapon systems used by our military to fight and win the nation's wars. Among other things they are used for brakes, engine blocks, valves, piping and other vehicle and naval components, aircraft loading systems, bomb racks, weapon handling systems and many other mission-critical applications. They provide the building blocks of our water, wastewater and other infrastructure, essential to the survival, health and support of our troops and civilian communities. In all, the iron industry provides more than 3,000 different components used by the military.

America's military infrastructure relies on iron and a strong iron sector for its success on the battlefield and in the rear echelon. In each of our nation's major conflicts during the past 100 years the iron industry has mobilized in support our war efforts. This industry is under constant assault from unfairly traded foreign imports. Many segments of the iron castings industry are seriously threatened by these imports, with the result that the ability of Americans to supply critical components to our defense industry, to maintain our water infrastructure in a time of crisis, and to quickly react to disasters – natural or otherwise – and restore our infrastructure will be destroyed, at the risk of American lives.

Moreover, the iron industry is a vital part of the American economy. Countless sectors in the United States depend upon the existence of metalcastings, including those related to automotive, construction, agriculture, medical supplies, computers, sporting goods, textiles, plumbing, gas and electrical transmission, renewable energy, water infrastructure and mining. Although the numbers have decreased because of unfair foreign competition, today there are more than 500 iron foundries across the United States that employ tens of thousands of American workers. U.S. metalcasting facilities are located in every state of the country.

2017 JUN 12 AM 9:40
U.S. EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

Across dozens of laws and regulations in the federal government, iron and steel go hand in hand. This represents a long-standing and commonsense agreement by the government that the entire ferrous metals sector and its supply chain are key strategic industries for the United States.

As someone with deep experience in this area, I know you understand the importance of the entire sector. It is important, however, that this broad view of what is more properly meant be conveyed throughout your investigation. A key first step would be ensuring that a voice for the iron industry is able to testify during the upcoming public hearing on the investigation on May 24. Secondly, I request that you include the iron castings industry in your ongoing section 232 investigation or, in the alternative, that you initiate a separate investigation on behalf of this vital industry.

Iron and steel are part of the same family of products, and these industries together are critical for our national security. I look forward to continuing to work with you and the Administration to advance this vital interest for Alabama and for the nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Luther Strange". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Luther Strange
U.S. Senator