

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 21, 2018

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
600 17th St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Secretary Ross:

We write to urge you to grant South Africa an exemption from President Trump's Section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminum. As members of the United States Senate, we have worked to facilitate strong trade and closer ties between the United States and South Africa, a dynamic country with a promising economy and a shared commitment to democratic values. Unfortunately, tariffs against South Africa threaten to unravel our years of effort alongside U.S. poultry producers and trade officials to open the South African market to U.S. poultry.

In 2000, the United States enacted the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which helps stimulate economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa by significantly enhancing market access to the United States. As part of the renewal of AGOA in 2015, our countries reached an agreement to eliminate longstanding barriers to U.S. poultry imports. After more than 15 years of South Africa blocking imports of U.S. poultry, the government agreed to allow the United States to export up to 65,000 tons of bone-in chicken portions to South Africa duty-free.

The poultry industry contributes billions of dollars to the U.S. economy. Poultry producers in our states are benefiting from new, duty-free access to the South African market, which is now at risk. In August, the South African Poultry Association (SAPA) filed a lawsuit seeking to reimpose tariffs on U.S. poultry. SAPA's lawsuit is directly in response to the steel and aluminum tariffs, which they claim represent a suspension of South Africa's AGOA benefits.

South African Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr. Rob Davies, reiterated during his trip to Washington, D.C., in July that South Africa's exports of steel and aluminum do not threaten U.S. national security. In fact, they account for less than one percent of U.S. steel imports and less than two percent of U.S. aluminum imports. South Africa complies with U.S. inspections of their products, ensuring that Chinese transshipments of steel and aluminum are not a part of their value chains.

We are encouraged by your commitment to the United States' economic relationship with Africa and your dialogue with African leaders at the 2017 and 2018 AGOA Forums. We urge you to continue advancing our trade relationships on the continent by exempting South Africa from the Section 232 tariffs, which will in turn preserve our AGOA agreement with South Africa and support the U.S. poultry industry.

Sincerely,



Johnny Isakson
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator

CC: The Honorable Robert E. Lighthizer, United States Trade Representative
The Honorable Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State
The Honorable Sonny Perdue, Secretary of Agriculture
Mr. Larry Kudlow, Director, National Economic Council