

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 6, 2009

The Honorable Gary Locke
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave.,
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Shara L. Aranoff
Chairman
U.S. International Trade Commission
NW 500 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20436

Dear Secretary Locke and Chairman Aranoff,

I am writing in support of NewPage Paper, the largest private employer in Western Maryland, and its pending petitions before the Department of Commerce and the International Trade Commission (ITC) regarding foreign producers' unfair trade practices.

In 2007, Commerce found that foreign paper companies were breaking international trade rules and receiving illegal support from their home countries, but the ITC decided that these violations didn't hurt NewPage or its employees, and so no penalties or remedies were imposed.

Since then, paper imports from countries with predatory trade practices have skyrocketed while domestic manufacturers and their employees have suffered. Just this year, the NewPage mill in my state partially shut down for two weeks in April, and entirely shut down for a week in May and a week in July. These shutdowns matter because they impact the family checkbook for the nearly 900 workers at NewPage, who either have to use vacation time or take unpaid leave.

The lost income also hurts the entire region since city and county governments rely on local tax revenue and small businesses rely on a strong local economy. The region was already facing serious economic challenges as the NewPage plant has lost over 450 jobs in the last several years. These most recent slowdowns and shutdowns put Western Maryland's future growth at even greater risk.

Manufacturing workers in Maryland and across the country have the know-how and determination to compete with anyone. But, as we have seen in many different sectors of our economy, when foreign countries break trade rules that they have pledged to follow, fair competition is impossible and international trade doesn't work. Commerce and the ITC must hold countries that break the rules accountable to protect the credibility of the international trade system, and most importantly to save jobs, which needs to be our number one priority as the country tries to recover from the recent economic crisis.

Please give NewPage's petition your fullest consideration, and thank you for your continued efforts to protect jobs in Maryland and across the country from the threat of unfair foreign trade.

Sincerely



Barbara A. Mikulski