

Washington, D.C. — Today Congressman Earl Blumenauer put his support behind the first two free trade agreements to come before Congress since the passage of Trade Promotion Authority, which allows the administration to negotiate trade agreements that are put before Congress for a straight up or down vote. To follow is Blumenauer's statement on the Chile and Singapore Trade Agreements voted on today in the U.S. House of Representatives:

"Honest debate and ratification of the bilateral free trade agreements with Chile and Singapore are important steps in this new era. It is time for us to move past the free trade versus fair trade debate that has dominated the considerations in this Chamber for most of the last five Congresses. Debaters from each side have become adept at using code words to deflect the inconvenient arguments of the other, or perhaps to not address them at all. It is time to deal with honest trade policy.

"Right now the majority of United States exports to Chile are taxed at a flat 6.0 percent rate. This compares to an average tariff on imports to the United States from Chile of approximately 0.5 percent. Currently, two-thirds of the Chilean imports to the United States arrive duty free. It is clear that we gain far more from this agreement with Chile than we give up.

"This agreement is also an opportunity for us to deal meaningfully with labor and environmental protections. The protections in Chile are the strongest in Latin America, and it is important that we act to support them.

"Enactment of this agreement will make it possible for a major corporation in my community to be more competitive. Freightliner Corporation, headquartered in the district I represent, manufactures trucks but has lost business on U.S. produced trucks in recent years to trucks from Mexico, Brazil or the European Union, nations that already have preferential trade access to Chile.

"With the U.S.-Singapore agreement, I was encouraged by steps taken to address concerns that had been raised in the weeks leading to today's floor vote. These actions addressed immigration issues, endangered species conservation, and a provision known as the Integrated Sourcing Initiative. The willingness to compromise and address these matters shows that the legislative process is, in fact, working.

"I hope that we are able to bring this atmosphere of cooperation and compromise to upcoming free trade agreements, ensuring that each one is tailored to the specific needs and

opportunities we may encounter with future partners.”