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Trade Briefs

Becerra Reported to be USTR Choice

Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-CA) is reported to have been offered the position of U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) by President-elect Barack Obama. There are conflicting reports over whether or not Becerra has accepted the offer, but he has emerged as the leading candidate for USTR.

Becerra is a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from California's 31st Congressional District. Considered to be a strong ally of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Becerra was elected in 1992 and was recently elected to serve as Democratic Caucus Vice Chair in the 111th Congress. He also holds a coveted spot on the House Committee for Ways and Means. Some have questioned whether Becerra would be willing to give up his status in the House for a job in the Obama Administration, while others have said that a chance to serve as USTR would be irresistible. Neither Becerra's staff nor the Obama-Biden transition team have commented on the offer, but there are reports that the position has been offered and accepted as well as reports that the two sides are still in negotiations.

Some in Washington believe that Becerra would be considered a centrist choice for USTR as he is someone who is in the Democratic Party's mainstream on trade. This is borne out by his voting record on trade, which is mixed. He has criticized some trade agreements such as the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) while voting for others like the U.S.-Peru Free Trade Agreement (FTA). However, others are concerned that he would overly emphasize "fair trade" over free trade. He is a member of the liberal Senator Bernie Sanders' (I-VT) Progressive Caucus, a group of 71 House Members that has strongly advocated for "fair trade" policies and condemned free trade deals. And when voting against the Oman FTA in 2006, he said that the U.S. system for devising trade agreements is "not only broken, but it is broken completely." The Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank that advocates free trade policies, evaluated Becerra's voting record and concluded that he was on the internationalist end of the trade spectrum. While in the House, Becerra voted against trade barriers 65% but voted against subsidies only 8% of the time. He voted for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a vote he now says he regrets. He opposed CAFTA and the FTA with Oman, but supported the agreements with Peru, Singapore, Bahrain, and Chile.

If Becerra accepts an offer to be USTR, it will not be revelatory of a new direction in Obama's trade policy. Rather, it would be a confirmation of a nuanced stance that is generally in favor of the idea of free trade but less aggressive than President George W. Bush in pursuing it through negotiated agreements.

Dumping Watch

ITC to Review Duty Orders on Prestressed Concrete Steel Wire from Brazil, Japan, Korea, Mexico, and Thailand

On December 1, the International Trade Commission (ITC) gave notice that it instituted five-year reviews concerning the antidumping (AD) duty orders on prestressed concrete steel wire from Brazil, India, Japan, Korea, Mexico, and Thailand. For Japan, this is the third review of this particular AD duty order, with the first antidumping finding on Japanese imports of this product having been issued in 1978. For Brazil, India, Korea, Mexico, and Thailand, this is the first review. The AD order concerning these countries was issued in January 2004. The ITC requested interested parties to respond to this notice by January 20, 2009, and to comment on the adequacy of responses by February 13, 2009. The ITC will then determine whether revocation of these various orders would be likely to lead to continuation or recurrence of material injury to the domestic industry.

Final Results of Review of AD Order on Cut-to-Length Carbon Steel Plate from China

On December 5, the Department of Commerce (DOC) gave notice of final results of the expedited sunset review of the antidumping (AD) duty order on certain cut-to-length carbon steel plate from China. On August 1, 2008, the DOC gave notice of the initiation of a sunset review of the AD order on this type of steel plate from China. The DOC reviewed the comments of petitioners and respondents and reached a conclusion that revocation of the AD duty order on Chinese cut-to-length carbon steel plate would likely result in continuation or recurrence of dumping. The DOC calculated the weighted-average dumping margins to be between 17.33% and 128.59%.

Federal Register Notices

International Trade Administration

[C-475-819] Certain Pasta From Italy: Extension of Time Limit for the Final Results of the Eleventh (2006) Countervailing Duty Administrative Review *73 FR 74141*, December 5, 2008.

[A-533-838] Carbazole Violet Pigment 23 From India: Final Results of Antidumping Duty Administrative Review *73 FR 74141-74142*, December 5, 2008.

[A-570-849] Certain Cut-To-Length Carbon Steel Plate From the People's Republic of China: Notice of Final Results of Expedited Sunset Review of Antidumping Duty Order *73 FR 74143-74144*, December 5, 2008.

[A-580-839] Certain Polyester Staple Fiber From Korea: Final Results of the 2006-2007 Antidumping Duty Administrative Review *73 FR 74144-74145*, December 5, 2008.

U.S.-European Union (EU) Safe Harbor Framework--Notice of Request for Public Comment *73 FR 74146*, December 5, 2008.

[Application No. 08-00009] Export Trade Certificate of Review: Notice of application for an Export Trade Certificate of Review from Golden Tree Trading Company *73 FR 73907-73908*, December 4, 2008.

[A-570-831] Fresh Garlic from the People's Republic of China: Extension of Time Limit for the Preliminary Results of the New Shipper Reviews *73 FR 73638*, December 3, 2008.

The Manufacturing Council: Meeting of The Manufacturing Council *73 FR 73638*, December 3, 2008.

(A-570-836) Glycine from the People's Republic of China: Extension of Time Limit for the Preliminary Results of Antidumping Duty Administrative Review *73 FR 73244*, December 2, 2008.

[A-580-861] Certain Circular Welded Carbon Quality Steel Line Pipe from the Republic of Korea: Termination of Antidumping Duty Investigation *73 FR 72766-72767*, December 1, 2008.

[A-570-882] Refined Brown Aluminum Oxide from the People's Republic of China: Preliminary Results of Antidumping Duty Administrative Review *73 FR 72767-72770*, December 1, 2008.

Initiation of Five-year ("Sunset") Reviews *73 FR 72770-72771*, December 1, 2008.

Notice of Scope Rulings *73 FR 72771-72774*, December 1, 2008.

International Trade Commission

[Investigation No. 337-TA-656] In the Matter of Certain Integrated Circuits and Products Containing Same; Notice of Commission Determination Not To Review an Initial Determination Terminating the Investigation on the Basis of a Settlement Agreement *73 FR 73955*, December 4, 2008.

[Investigations Nos. 701-TA-456 and 731-TA-1151-1152 (Final)] Citric Acid and Certain Citrate Salts From Canada and China *73 FR 73955-73957*, December 4, 2008.

[USITC SE-08-034] Government in the Sunshine Act Meeting Notice *73 FR 73957*, December 4, 2008.

[Investigation No. 731-TA-1135 (Final)] Sodium Metal from France *73 FR 73347*, December 2, 2008.

[Investigation No. 731-TA-752 (Second Review)] Crawfish Tail Meat From China *73 FR 72833-72834*, December 1, 2008.

[Investigation Nos. 701-TA-432 and 731-TA-1024-1028 (Review) and AA1921-188 (Third Review)] Prestressed Concrete Steel Wire Strand From Brazil, India, Japan, Korea, Mexico, and Thailand *73 FR 72834-72836*, December 1, 2008.

[Investigation Nos. 731-TA-394-A & 399-A (Second Review) (Remand)] Ball Bearings From Japan and the United Kingdom *73 FR 72836-72837*, December 1, 2008.

[Investigation Nos. 731-TA-986 and 987 (Review)] Ferrovandium From China and South Africa *73 FR 72837*, December 1, 2008.

[Investigation No. 731-TA-1013 (Review)] Saccharin From China *73 FR 72837-72838*, December 1, 2008.

The Week Ahead

- On Monday, December 8, the ITC held a vote on the five-year sunset review adequacy determination on barium carbonate from China.
- On Friday, December 12, the ITC will hold a vote on preliminary phase antidumping and countervailing duty investigations into commodity matchbooks from India.