



# INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL ENGINEERS AFL-CIO & CLC

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April 13, 2021

Ms. Julie Greene  
Assistant United States Trade Representative for Public Engagement  
600 Seventeenth Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20508

Ms. Nora Todd  
Chief of Staff, United States Trade Representative  
600 Seventeenth Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ms. Greene and Ms. Todd:

On behalf of 85,000 members of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, we want to thank Ambassador Tai again for hosting today's videoconference call with Labor to hear our thoughts on access to vaccines around the world.

We concur in Ambassador Tai's message that the first test of US policies is that they serve the interests of our workers.

One clear message from Labor is that it is a no-brainer to improve global access to vaccines for public health reasons, for humanitarian reasons, for worker safety, and for geopolitical reasons.

It is worth stating that it is implicit in those goals that we should do something that works and achieves our purposes. Perhaps Ambassador Tai hinted at that when she said the history of decision-making in the WTO is fraught and not encouraging in this case.

IFPTE members are very practical and focused on what works. For us, that means exploiting the intellectual property in the vaccines, but also applying expertise in the industrial processes and mobilizing supply chains, all while meeting very high standards for efficacy and safety, among other issues. A TRIPS waiver might be one way to do that, but it might not be the best way.

For us, ramping up production processes to global scale is not at all a no-brainer. A year ago, we had no capacity for vaccines. That capacity was built through reasonably coherent industrial strategies, including heavy public funding and coordination by governments in the US, Europe, and elsewhere.

We can keep our focus on the goal of vaccinating world-wide by extending those industrial policies, making use of trade agreements when possible, but other mechanisms as well. Industrial policy might include The Defense Production Act, compulsory licensing, or [march-in rights under the Bayh-Dole Act](#), for example. Thirty-four state Attorneys General have already asked for [march-in rights to increase supplies of Remdesivir](#) as a treatment in the pandemic.

If a stick approach is on the table, a carrot approach is also possible, in which public funding repeats the subsidization of our existing capacity – a Warp Speed 2.0, so to speak. This would include growing our domestic supply chain as well as production of the vaccines themselves.

In the videoconference call, we mentioned that US has lost industrial capacity in many areas. We have become dependent on India and China for active pharmaceutical ingredients. An active industrial policy for global vaccination could continue strengthening our domestic capacity in pharmaceuticals, our expertise, and domestic supply chains.

From our perspective in manufacturing, we believe a coordinated effort with existing manufacturing know-how would produce more vaccine doses, on a shorter timeline, with fewer production problems, less risk, and higher public acceptance of the vaccines. We are not confident that we would achieve the same outcomes by simply granting waivers for intellectual property and letting first-time producers re-create the industrial capacity and know-how needed to ramp up a complex industrial process to global scale.

A coordinated industrial strategy serves our interests for public health, humanitarian purposes, worker safety, and enhances our standing geopolitically. It also manages and balances intellectual property rights and interests, creates jobs in the US, and maintains our competitive advantage in a very important industrial sector. As such, industrial strategy must connect public investments to the public good. In this instance, vaccinating people to control the pandemic, pricing close to the cost of production, preferences for domestic suppliers, and commitment to keep production in the U.S. are all public goods.

We know time is short and the need is very pressing. We are happy to discuss this further if you or Ambassador Tai think that makes sense.

Sincerely,



Paul Shearon  
IFPTE President



Matthew S. Biggs  
IFPTE Secretary Treasurer/Legislative Director

Cc:  
Hon. Kathrine Tai, U.S. Trade Representative