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Business Coalition Urges Senate Co-Sponsors and Swift Action on Bill to Keep U.S. Firms and Farmers Competitive in Growing Russian Market

June 21, 2012 (Washington, DC) – The Coalition for U.S.-Russia Trade (www.usrussiatrade.org) – a broad-based group of U.S. corporations, trade associations and small businesses actively seeking to increase U.S. exports and jobs with increased trade with Russia – today released a letter with more than 100 signatories urging U.S. Senators to co-sponsor legislation (S.3285) to enact Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) with Russia.

Senators Max Baucus (D-MT), John Thune (R-SD), John Kerry (D-MA), and John McCain (R-AZ) introduced S. 3285 last week, and the Coalition is calling for action on the legislation by the August recess to ensure that U.S. manufacturers, farmers and service providers have access to the full range of market-opening measures that will go into effect when Russia joins the World Trade Organization (WTO) this summer.

"Russia is on track to join the WTO in a matter of weeks, and no action by Congress can change that. In fact, Russia's accession represents a strong deal that includes transparency and accountability commitments that will encourage an improved environment for business," noted Randi Levinas, Executive Director of the Coalition for U.S.-Russia Trade and Executive Vice President of the U.S.-Russia Business Council (www.usrbc.org). "Where Congress' role is critical is in enacting PNTR; that is, in determining whether U.S. business will gain access to the many commitments Russia has made -- commitments that our foreign competitors will automatically enjoy on Day 1 of Russia's entry into the WTO."

Russia is the 9th largest world economy, home to approximately 140 million highly-educated and discerning consumers and an import market of more than \$320 billion.

"The Russia PNTR bill introduced last week supports U.S. businesses and workers seeking to tap into export and sales opportunities in Russia's large and growing market," said Levinas. "We urge all Senators to step up for U.S. exports and U.S. jobs by joining Senators Baucus, Thune, Kerry and McCain on S. 3285 and moving swiftly to pass Russia PNTR by the August recess. Without PNTR in hand when Russia joins the WTO, our companies risk losing out not only on lucrative contracts but also on opportunities to share good corporate governance rules and best business practices. Those opportunities will not be easily recouped."

The Coalition for U.S.-Russia Trade, housed at the U.S.-Russia Business Council, is committed to strengthening U.S.-Russian commercial ties and preserving the competitiveness of U.S. firms, farmers and workers in the Russian market. For more information, please visit the Coalition's website at www.usrussiatrade.org.

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