



For Immediate Release

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West Coast Ports Labor Disruptions Affecting U.S. Hides and Skins Exports

Washington, D.C., November 14, 2014 – Ongoing labor disruptions at west coast ports in the United States are negatively impacting shipments of hides and skins products to foreign markets. The disruptions, which range from worker slowdowns to picket lines and strikes, have spread to all major ports on the coast over the last several weeks.

As a result of the instability, U.S. exporters are finding it increasingly difficult to transport hides and skins from processing plants to container ships destined for foreign markets. Many steamship lines, railroads and trucking companies are delaying or rejecting export cargo due to congestion and uncertainty. Approximately 500,000 hides and skins are shipped each week and recent reports indicate shipments are being delayed by as many as 10 to 12 days.

“Customers rely on U.S. suppliers of hides and skins for reliable, consistent product delivery,” said Stephen Sothmann, President of the U.S. Hide, Skin and Leather Association (USHSLA). “It is one of the most important features of the U.S. industry. This situation threatens to jeopardize the relationships the exporters have developed and the strong export values experienced over the last several years.”

The situation is a result of a breakdown in negotiations between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) on a new long term labor contract governing the operation of the ports. The parties have been negotiating a new contract since the previous one expired on July 1, 2014.

In response to the disruptions, the USHSLA has joined a coalition of over 100 business and industry groups urging President Barack Obama to intervene in the dispute and help bring about a resolution. The coalition is requesting the administration send federal mediators to assist negotiations between the parties.

It is estimated the labor disruptions may hurt the U.S. economy by as much as \$2 billion per day.

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The **U.S. Hide, Skin and Leather Association (USHSLA)** is a full service industry organization devoted to the U.S. hides, skins and wet blue leather products industry. Founded in 1979, the association provides its members with government, public relations, and international trade assistance and support. The USHSLA is a cooperator under the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s foreign market development programs, assisting U.S. firms develop new markets for U.S. agricultural exports. USHSLA is at the forefront of the industry’s needs, providing members with service, information, and opportunities to compete in today’s global marketplace.