

NEWS RELEASE

From Rep. Charles B. Rangel

Ranking Democrat, Committee on Ways and Means

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senior Ways and Means Democrats Call Upon Administration to Respect Will of Congress Regarding Addressing Forced Labor in Oman

WASHINGTON, DC - Ways and Means Ranking Member Charles B. Rangel, Trade Subcommittee Ranking Member Benjamin Cardin, and senior Ways and Means Members, Reps. Sander Levin and Xavier Becerra, today issued the following statement regarding indications that the Administration intends to ignore the expressed will of the Senate Finance Committee by excluding from legislation implementing the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement an amendment agreed to by the Finance Committee.

"Yesterday, the Senate Finance Committee voted unanimously to amend legislation implementing the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement to ensure the agreement does not provide preferential treatment for goods made under slave labor conditions. The Committee's action reflects bipartisan recognition that the simple requirement included in the text of the agreement requiring only that a country 'enforce its labor laws' is inadequate.

"It is important for the Administration to include the amendment adopted by the Finance Committee in the final implementing legislation for two reasons. First, the amendment addresses the very important and troublesome issue of trafficking of foreign workers - one of several areas of concern with regard to labor conditions in Oman. Second, the statutory 'fast track' process for considering trade agreements in Congress must be respected. For the Administration to ignore the unanimous will of the Finance Committee would make a mockery of this process."