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[Thune Applauds Senate Passage of Bill to Establish Permanent Normal Trade Relations with Russia](#)

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator John Thune (R-S.D.), Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee Subcommittee on International Trade, Customs and Global Competitiveness, today applauded the bipartisan Senate passage of legislation that would establish permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) with Russia. The bill (H.R. 6156), which passed in the Senate by a vote of 92 to 4, would encourage job creation at home by taking advantage of the new trade commitments that Russia has made as part of their recent accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The legislation supports the creation of American jobs in nearly every sector of the U.S. economy including agriculture, manufacturing, and services. Similar legislation was introduced by Thune, Finance Chairman Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), and others earlier this year and passed the Senate Finance Committee on July 18, 2012. The House passed its counterpart bill on November 16, 2012, by a vote of 365 to 43. The legislation will now be sent to the president for his approval.

“American businesses and entrepreneurs will no longer face a competitive disadvantage in the Russian market,” said Thune. “The Senate’s adoption of Russia PNTR today opens up new possibilities for American manufacturers, farmers, ranchers, and service providers. Not only does this legislation support American jobs by promoting our products and services abroad, but it will also help to strengthen the rule of law and combat corruption with the inclusion of the Magnitsky human rights provisions. Russia is the fifth largest importer of agricultural products and imported nearly \$32 billion in agricultural commodities last year, making it a tremendous opportunity for commodity exporters. I look forward to President Obama signing this bill into law, and ensuring we do not delay job creation and export opportunities both in South Dakota and across the country.”

Russia joined the WTO in August of 2012. As part of the accession process, Russia lowered tariffs and increased market access for businesses from other WTO member countries that afford Russia PNTR treatment. Congress needed to pass legislation establishing PNTR with Russia for the U.S. to enjoy the full economic benefits of Russia’s commitments.

Unlike a free trade agreement, the U.S. will not provide any new market access benefits, lower any U.S. tariffs, or make other changes to our trade laws as a result of Russia's WTO accession. PNTR simply allows American businesses to take advantage of Russia's concessions. These will include: additional market access for U.S. service providers; intellectual property enforcement; higher quotas for U.S. beef, poultry and pork producers; decreased Russian agriculture subsidies; science-based sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures; and dispute settlement to enforce WTO rules.