

US Complacent in WTO Compliance Dispute

Geneva (PRWEB) March 20, 2006 -- The US today revealed nothing about progress made in almost a year regarding compliance with the WTO's 2005 ruling on Antigua's online gambling industry*.

In a statement to the WTO Dispute Settlement Body where the US was expected to explain the status of compliance efforts, the US Trade Representative said only that "the US administration, in consultation with Congress, has been working on appropriate steps to resolve this matter."

In response, Antigua referred to US complacency regarding the issue, and making particular note to the Dispute Settlement Body that the recent Leach and Goodlatte Bills introduced to Congress are "each as directly contrary to the recommendations and rulings of the Dispute Settlement Body as could possibly be imagined."

The statement by the Antiguan Ambassador is attached. Key points include:

- The US has not responded to requests to engage with Antigua in seeking a fair solution
- The only legislation that has been introduced is legislation directly contradictory to the WTO rulings
- The USTR has stated in front of at least one trade group that if they don't comply, Antigua has no real recourse despite the WTO support.
- This case could prove to be a watershed for the WTO since it is the first time a small country has taken on a large country and won, begging the question -- can the WTO represent the best interests of small countries or not?

In summation, the Antiguan Ambassador urged the United States "to demonstrate whether it is willing to be a responsible stakeholder in the WTO -- whether the WTO agreements are to work for all of us, equally, or whether the WTO is a 'one-way street' for the large economies to further enrich themselves at the expense of lesser ones."

The final deadline for US compliance is in two weeks on April 3rd, when it will become apparent whether the US respects the WTO compliance process or not.

* United States -- Measures Affecting the Cross-Border Supply of Gambling and Betting Services (DS285), pending before the World Trade Organization

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