



For Immediate Release

November 18, 2005

WLF CONVERSATIONS WITH Examines Barriers to International Trade

All eyes in the American business community and others affected by international trade will be focused on the meeting of the World Trade Organization next month in Hong Kong. While transparent trade barriers such as tariffs will certainly be on the agenda, another, far more pernicious set of trade impediments will surely be overlooked, much to the chagrin of free trade proponents. These are known as “non-tariff barriers,” which, as discussed in the latest installment of Washington Legal Foundation’s (WLF) CONVERSATIONS WITH publication series, are proliferating throughout the world and disrupting trade in both industrialized and less developed countries.

Former Attorney General **Dick Thornburgh** moderates this discussion with George Mason University Law School professor **William H. Lash, III**. Professor Lash served as Assistant Secretary for Market Access and Compliance in the U.S. Department of Commerce from 2001-2005. As Assistant Secretary, he was responsible for ensuring that foreign governments fully complied with more than 250 trade agreements signed by the United States.

As Professor Lash states during the conversation, “non-tariff barriers are limited only by the creativity and conscience of the trading partner.” He and Mr. Thornburgh also discuss some of the more notorious regulatory and legal impediments that U.S. companies must face from our largest trading partners. Examples cited include Europe’s regulatory hostility to genetically enhanced crops and foods containing them; China’s lack of regard for patents and other intellectual property of innovative businesses; and numerous other countries’ strict control of pricing for goods such as pharmaceuticals. Mr. Lash also notes that the U.S. is guilty of maintaining some significant non-tariff barriers of its own, including the oppressive uncertainty that our litigation system imposes on foreign corporations and investors. Finally, Mr. Lash draws upon his recent experience at the Commerce Department to offer some thoughts on how companies can address these barriers, and how the government should intensify its battle against them on behalf of American consumers and businesses.

Washington Legal Foundation is a national, non-profit public interest law and policy center. By utilizing a unique approach in forwarding its mission — publishing timely legal studies, engaging in innovative litigation, and communicating directly to the public — WLF has become the nation’s most effective advocate of free enterprise.

Copies of this educational paper can be obtained by printing a request form from <http://www.wlf.org/Publishing/order.pdf> and mailing it to: Publications Department, Washington Legal Foundation, 2009 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.