

# USTR Requests Comments and Schedules Hearing on NAFTA Negotiations

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May 25, 2017 Edward Lebow

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**PRACTICES** Mexico, Canada, Mexico Energy Reform, International

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The Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) has published in the Federal Register a Notice of a [“Request for Comments on Negotiating Objectives Regarding Modernization of the North American Free Trade Agreement With Canada and Mexico.”](#) In the Notice, USTR advises that it will accept written comments by June 12, 2017 and will hold a public hearing at the U.S. International Trade Commission in Washington, DC, on June 27, 2017 regarding the upcoming renegotiation of NAFTA.

The USTR Notice lists nearly 20 different possible subjects for comment, including both general and specific issues, such as:

- General negotiating objectives
- Economic costs and benefits of tariff changes
- Past experience under NAFTA suggesting modifications
- Customs facilitation
- Rules of origin
- Regulatory barriers to trade such as sanitary and phytosanitary measures
- Barriers to trade in services
- Digital trade
- Intellectual property rights
- Investment issues
- Competition law
- Government procurement
- Environmental issues
- Labor issues
- Trade remedies

USTR’s solicitation of comments and scheduling of a public hearing follow upon the notice provided by USTR Robert Lighthizer to Congress on May 18, 2017 indicating the Administration’s intent to renegotiate NAFTA. USTR Lighthizer’s notice initiated the 90-day consultation period between the Administration and Congress that is required by the “Fast Track” (also known as “Trade Promotion Authority” or “TPA”) provisions of U.S. law that will permit the eventually renegotiated agreement to be afforded a single up or down vote in Congress, thus insulating it from potentially destructive amendments.

There is as of yet no schedule for the negotiations, although Administration officials have at various times expressed several targets for their conclusion, including “before the Mexican elections” (in July 2018), “within a year” and, most ambitiously, “before the end of 2017”.

For additional resources on NAFTA, visit our [NAFTA page](#).