**Talking points for Tridonex RRM case**

**Background on USMCA/RRM**

* For decades, workers in Mexico have suffered under a corrupt system of industrial relations where employer-controlled “protection unions” sign bogus collective bargaining contracts with companies that lock in low wages and standards without workers’ consent.
* The USMCA required Mexico to overhaul its labor law and enforcement regime to advance workers’ rights. One important goal was to eliminate protection unions and their corrupt deals with employers.
* To ensure Mexican employers comply with the USMCA’s right of free association and collective bargaining obligations and their implementation in Mexico’s new labor law , the USMCA created a new “Rapid Response” enforcement mechanism that provides for targeted penalties against companies that continue to deny workers’ freedom of association, including blocking goods at the border after repeated violations,.
* The Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) is an essential part of the USMCA’s strengthened labor standards that unions and Congressional Democrats fought for.It must be used aggressively and effectively for the agreement to achieve its objectives.

**Facts of the Tridonex Case**

* The abuses at the Tridonex facility in Matamoros are a flagrant violation of the USMCA and provide an alarming example of how many employers in Mexico deny workers their rights, often with the assistance of state and local authorities.
* Workers at the Tridonex facility toil under a “protection contract” – a collective bargaining agreement reached between management and a company-controlled union – that they had no role in negotiating and that they have never voted on.
* Fed up with poverty wages and lousy working conditions, a group of Tridonex workers organized to join an independent trade union to replace the company-controlled protection union. The company responded swiftly by firing hundreds of union supporters and compelling others to resign.
* Instead of protecting the workers, the state government of Tamaulipas aided the company’s effort to crush the independent union by ignoring its lawful requests to schedule a democratic vote by the Tridonex workers for control of the existing collective bargaining agreement.
* Adding insult to injury, the government of Tamaulipas then filed trumped-up criminal charges against the independent union’s lawyer, Susana Prieto Terrazas, as a result of which she was imprisoned at a COVID-ridden state penitentiary and is now barred from entering the state of Tamaulipas where the Tridonex plants and the workers she represents are located. The prosecution of Prieto was covered extensively in the press and has had a profound chilling effect on workers’ rights across Mexico, which must not be allowed to stand.
* This case provides a critical test of whether Mexico’s labor reforms and USMCA’s Rapid Response Mechanism can deliver for Mexican workers who are denied their fundamental right to organize and empower them to bargain for better wages and working conditions.

**Timing and goal of complaint**

* Since USMCA entered into force reports of multiple cases of worker abuse across Mexico have been building. The COVID pandemic complicated the fact-gathering process, but we feel confident that this is a very strong first case.
* Now that Ambassador Tai and her team are in place, and we expect the Department of Labor to fill out its ILAB team shortly, we have the utmost confidence the Biden Administration will vigorously pursue this case to obtain justice for the unjustly terminated workers.
* A successful resolution of this case is essential. It will send a message to Mexican employers and state and local government officials who continue to resist implementation of labor law reforms.

**Additional Messaging**

* Working together, congressional Democrats, labor unions, and activists nationwide included stronger labor standards and enforcement in the revised NAFTA.
* The workers in this case have been denied basic labor rights guaranteed under Mexican law and the USMCA.
* Workers trying to form an independent union at the Matamoros “Tridonex” facility were fired and their independent union was never recognized. An election to decide control over the contract has not happened. The company continued to pay dues to a protection union while the independent union’s lawyer was imprisoned on false charges.
* We expect the USMCA Rapid Response labor rights enforcement mechanism to remedy outrageous violations of workers’ rights at the Matamoros Tridonex auto parts plants and are committed to enforcing the labor standards in USMCA to protect workers.