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UNITED DAILY NEWS EDITORIAL:
The Referendums are Connected to the Future of Taiwan's International Trade
公投議題攸關台灣國際經貿的未來

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From December 8-10, 2021, Taiwan participated in President Joe Biden's The Summit for Democracy. This event gathers the world's leading democracies to counter authoritarianism, combat corruption, and promote respect for human rights at home and abroad. Taiwan's inclusion is a testament to the importance that America places on the extraordinary democratic progress that Taiwan has made since its first democratic presidential election in 1996. Taiwan's spirited democracy is a crucial factor in its growing global support, and the rights of its citizens to determine their own future.

That said, with democracy comes responsibility. Taiwan's citizens have the right to elect their own governing officials and to call referendums to decide important issues. The upcoming referendums taking place on December 18, 2021, are of particular importance to the United States, given that it will include a vote on Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen's August 2020 decision to open the Taiwan market to American pork imports containing trace amounts of ractopamine.

Since 2006, U.S.-Taiwan trade disputes have been dominated by disagreements over agriculture. While in 2020 agriculture made up only 4.21% of bilateral trade between the two countries, the U.S. feels that Taiwan has long reneged on commitments to open its market to beef and pork.

From 2006 to 2021, the U.S.-Taiwan trade relationship has undergone major tensions as a function of these bans on American meat. Annual trade talks have been at times cancelled, and efforts to launch bilateral trade agreement talks have foundered over the failure of Taiwan to follow through on its agreed upon commitments.

Former Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou opened the Taiwan market to American beef with ractopamine almost 10 years ago, and Taiwan has been consuming increasing amounts of it. To date, there has been no identified health issues associated with Taiwan citizens eating this American beef. In the United States and around the world, the meat is consumed in large quantities with global citizens comfortable that it is safe.

It would defy logic if Taiwan were to argue that American pork with ractopamine is unsafe and should be banned, while American beef with ractopamine should be consumed in Taiwan's restaurants and homes without concern. The conclusion from the U.S. towards this contradictory position is that this isn't a health issue at all, but a matter of domestic political fighting where American products are unfairly being accused of being something they're not in order to score political points.

At the same time, Taiwan should also consider whether it wants to be a significant part of the international trade environment or part of the PRC's economic orbit. A trading powerhouse like Taiwan, with its global leading industries, can no longer sit on



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the sidelines while others make decisions that impact its citizens and the country's future. It is imperative that Taiwan has a voice in these discussions and debates to ensure that it is fairly treated by the international economic system. To gain a seat at the international trade table, Taiwan must be seen as a reliable and honest partner that follows through on the international trade commitments that it makes. It's about trust.

The impact of the upcoming referendum over pork imports will not merely be local. This is a bilateral trade issue, and the U.S. will naturally hold a position and perspective.

The U.S. and Taiwan went through 15 years of strained trade relations over this issue. President Tsai finally took the right step to follow through with the commitment to open Taiwan's markets, and trade relations shifted in a positive direction. If the people of Taiwan undertake decisions based on political considerations - such as passing the upcoming referendum and reneging on pork liberalization, negatively impacting their country's relationship with the United States - there are going to be consequences.

I have been the president of USTBC for the past 21 years, including during both KMT and DPP administrations. As with many of Taiwan's foreign friends, I am not pro-KMT or pro-DPP, I am pro-Taiwan. I want to see closer and more mutually beneficial trade and investment ties between our countries because it draws us closer together. I am deeply concerned about this referendum, and hope Taiwan's citizens will carefully consider this issue which has long impacted the relationship between our two countries.

Let us go forward together, not backwards apart.

台灣在 2021 年 12 月 8 日至 10 日參加美國拜登總統召開的民主峰會。該活動彙集世界領先的民主國家，以對抗威權主義、打擊腐敗，並且促進國內外對人權的尊重。台灣的加入證明了美國重視台灣自 1996 年第一次民主總統選舉以來所展現的非凡民主進步。台灣充滿活力的民主是其全球支持日益成長的關鍵因素，也是台灣民眾有權決定自己未來的關鍵因素。

在此同時，民主伴隨著責任。台灣民眾有權選擇執政官員，並舉行公投來決定重要議題。即將於 2021 年 12 月 18 日舉行的公投對美國特為重要，因為投票項目將涉及蔡英文總統在 2020 年 8 月宣布將開放含有微量萊克多巴胺的美國豬肉進口的決策。

自 2006 年以來，台美貿易爭端一直以農業分歧為主。雖然在 2020 年，農業僅佔兩國雙邊貿易的 4.21%，美國仍認為台灣多次違背要開放牛肉和豬肉市場的相關承諾。

從 2006 年到 2021 年，基於台灣對美國肉類的相關限制，台美貿易關係經歷 15 年的緊繃局勢，包括年度貿易談判不時被取消，以及雙邊貿易協定的相關進程也因台灣未能履行其承諾而失敗。

馬英九前總統在大約 10 年前開放了含有萊劑的美國牛肉進入台灣市場，嗣後其消費量穩定增加，且未有任何台灣民眾食用美國牛肉有關的健康問題發生。含有萊劑的肉品在美國和世界各地都被大量消費，由此可見各國民眾皆認



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為其安全無疑。

假設台灣片面宣稱含有萊劑的美國豬肉不安全且應該被禁止，但同時又認為同含有萊劑的美國牛肉安全，可以在台灣的餐館和家中安全食用，這顯然不合邏輯。美國對這種矛盾立場的結論是：這根本不是健康議題，而是國內的政治角力，美國產品因此被迫成為政治籌碼且遭受到不公平的待遇。

而同時，台灣應該思考的是台灣盼成為國際貿易環境的重要一員，還是中國經濟軌道的一部分。像台灣這樣擁有全球領先產業的貿易巨頭，不應再做旁觀者，任由他人做出影響其民眾和國家未來的決策。台灣必須在這些討論和辯論中擁有發言權，以確保台灣在國際經濟體系上被公平對待。為了在國際貿易談判桌上佔有一席之地，台灣必須被視為誠實可靠的夥伴，履行對國際貿易所作出的承諾，事關相互信任。

即將到來的萊豬公投所造成的影響將不僅是對台灣國內。這是一個雙邊貿易議題，美方當然也會有其立場與觀點。

美國和台灣因為農業議題經歷了15年僵持不下的貿易關係。蔡總統終於邁出了正確的步伐，履行開放台灣市場的承諾，因此貿易關係也朝著積極的方向發展。如果台灣因為政治因素通過即將到來的萊豬公投，背棄豬肉進口自由化的承諾，從而對台灣與美國的關係帶來負面影響，則將自然會有後果。

我擔任美台商會會長長達21年時間，期中歷經台灣兩黨執政。如同許多其他台灣的外國友人，我是台灣不分黨派的長久支持者。我希望台美能發展更緊密且互利互惠的投資與貿易關係，對兩國民眾都帶來好處。但針對本次公投，我深感到憂心，也希望台灣民眾慎重考慮這項長久以來攸關台美兩國的重要議題。

讓我們一起向前行，而不是走回頭路。

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