

Timothy Brightbill Discusses Trans-Pacific Partnership's Impact on U.S. Steel Industry

American Metal Market

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Timothy C. Brightbill, a partner in Wiley Rein's International Trade Practice, was a featured panelist at the Association of Steel Distributors' conference in Naples, Florida. Mr. Brightbill, whose April 2 presentation focused on the impact of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) on the U.S. steel industry, was quoted in *American Metal Market's* coverage of the event.

"I'm very skeptical of the benefits for manufacturing, generally, in the TPP," he said of the 12-nation pact, which is the largest U.S. free-trade agreement in history and has not yet been finalized. Free-trade agreements typically cover and cut tariffs, but Mr. Brightbill said many countries—including the United States—already have very low or no tariffs on steel imports.

Various tariffs on scrap and iron ore, maintained by trading partners and TPP parties such as Malaysia and Vietnam, could be reduced through the TPP—but that process could take years, Mr. Brightbill said. In addition, Chinese exports of hot-rolled coil and other steel to TPP countries will receive duty-free treatment under the agreement when that steel is made into other products and sent to the United States. The TPP doesn't substantially alter U.S. trade case laws or "Buy America" provisions, he said.

But he noted that fresh provisions in the TPP discourage state-owned enterprises, and offer ways to ensure such companies act like purely commercial entities. Mr. Brightbill said this is an encouraging development even though China is not a party to the TPP, because it

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could set the tone and framework for future trade negotiations with China and other Asia Pacific nations.

The TPP agreement must be approved by the U.S. Congress and the legislatures of other participating countries. Many countries hope to vote on the deal by the end of 2016, and the pact remains a "huge priority" for the Obama Administration, Mr. Brightbill said.