

EU Switches from “Satisfactory Progress” to a Firm Deadline

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Sept. 28 – Last May, the EU said it wanted “satisfactory progress” on ETI repeal by September 30, the end of the current fiscal year. Last Friday, September 26, it raised the ante.

According to CQ Today, Petros Sourmelis, identified as the “head of the trade section for the European Union in Washington,” announced a firm deadline for ETI repeal: December 31. Sourmelis was quoted as saying, “We want to see the legislative repeal . . . adopted by both houses of Congress before the end of the year.”

According to the CQ story, Sourmelis said the EU would monitor Congress’s progress as the fall progressed, and if it “appeared that ‘completion of the Congressional process,’ meaning ‘adopting a conference report,’ is not ‘under way,’” the EU would set the wheels in motion to impose sanctions.

This throws off the plans of every U.S. politico who has bothered to address the “when” issue of ETI repeal. As recently as Thursday, September 25, Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Max Baucus, D-Montana, said that action this year by a congressional committee should be sufficient to stave off EU retaliation. The same day, SFC Chair Charles E. Grassley, R-Iowa, said ETI repeal legislation did not have “must pass” status with anyone, and that year-end passage of an ETI bill by one house of Congress would be enough.

Unless Sourmelis smiles on Monday and says, “just kidding,” all that must now change, and fast.