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**For Immediate Release**

## **TPPB & Other Groups Meet with U.S. Trade Representative over Key Issues**

**AUSTIN, Texas (March 3, 2011)**– Texas Peanut Producers Board member Ted Higginbottom met with government leaders Feb. 24 to discuss a number of pertinent trade issues affecting Texas peanut producers and the industry as a whole.

Higginbottom met with U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk and Texas Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples last week to emphasize a number of state peanut trade issues, particularly in Mexico.

“One of the biggest issues was the trucking dispute between Mexico and the U.S.,” Higginbottom said. “Not only has the unrest in Mexico made people afraid to drive trucks across the border, there have been significant delays in transportation due to increased food safety inspections and holdups.”

The roundtable-style meeting brought 8-10 different commodity groups from around the state together to discuss the importance of regaining trade relations with Mexico.

Trade with Mexico is especially important for Texas peanut production because of the high quality and unique characteristics of peanuts grown and exported from the state.

“We produce peanuts low in aflatoxin and high oleic trait, which gives them a longer shelf life and higher quality than those grown in many other parts of the country,” Higginbottom said.

Along with border exporting issues, were tariffs and a push for sealing free trade agreements with Korea and Colombia, who are equally important to exporting in the U.S.

Representative Kirk expressed his gratitude for hearing each opinion and thanked the commodity groups for attending the meeting.

While no solutions to these trade issues were made, Higginbottom said the meeting was a good way to have face-to-face communication with Kirk and Staples and explain concerns in a manner where different commodities were able to be heard in one sitting.

“I feel like it was certainly worth attending, to put in our two cents,” Higginbottom said. “Kirk kept an open-door policy style of communication, which helps bridge the gap between producers and government officials.”

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*The Texas Peanut Producers Board is a state-wide board funded by a \$2 per ton voluntary checkoff program. TPPB is responsible for coordinating peanut research, promotion and marketing programs. For more information, visit [www.TexasPeanutBoard.com](http://www.TexasPeanutBoard.com) or contact TPPB Communications Director Stephanie Pruitt at [stephanie@texaspeanutboard.com](mailto:stephanie@texaspeanutboard.com).*