

# Opening New Markets And Expanding Opportunities Through Free Trade

*President Bush Calls On Congress To Deliver Growth, Jobs, And Prosperity To The American People By Approving Pending Free Trade Agreements*

**Tonight, President Bush will call on Congress to open markets for American workers and entrepreneurs by approving free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea.** In December, President Bush signed legislation approving the U.S.-Peru free trade agreement, which Congress passed with strong bipartisan support to expand trade and investment and create new opportunities for citizens of both nations. Congress should build on this progress by approving free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea to level the playing field for U.S. products and services in these countries. All three pending free trade agreements include the same labor and environment provisions as the Peru free trade agreement, which the Administration negotiated with Congressional leadership as part of the May 10, 2007, bipartisan agreement on trade policy.

- **The President will urge Congress to reauthorize and reform the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program to help workers directly displaced by trade take advantage of America's dynamic economy.** President Bush believes American workers, farmers, and entrepreneurs can compete with anybody, anywhere as long as the rules are fair. The President also believes the Federal government has a role to play in helping workers directly displaced by trade adjust to changes in our dynamic economy. The TAA program puts money and choices directly in the hands of workers looking to learn new skills and find new jobs.
- **The President continues to support America's community colleges, which represent one of the best sources of training for the jobs of the 21st century.** As the economy changes and requires different skills, curricula at community colleges are flexible enough to respond quickly to the needs of local employers. Because they are adaptable and accessible, community colleges are increasingly critical providers of job training, both for degree-seekers and for workers seeking to retool, refine, and broaden their skills.

## Expanding Free Trade And Investment Is Critical To Continued Economic Growth And Job Creation

- **Expanding trade and investment advances the national security and the economic interests of the United States.** Opening markets has helped expand democracy, strengthen the rule of law, and lift hundreds of millions out of poverty worldwide. Open markets also contribute to America's prosperity – exports now account for a larger percentage of our GDP than at any other time in our history, meaning that trade is supporting economic growth. Exports and foreign investment also support higher-paying jobs for American workers.
- **Free trade agreements are benefiting the U.S. economy.** For example, in the four years since we signed a free trade agreement with Chile, American exports to that country have more than doubled. And in just one year since we began implementing a free trade agreement with Central American nations and the Dominican Republic, American exports have grown by 13 percent. Free trade also benefits Americans by providing consumers with greater varieties of goods from which to choose.
- **The President is committed to concluding an ambitious Doha Round agreement this year to break down trade barriers at the global level.** A successful agreement will further open markets for American goods, crops, and services and help millions struggling to escape poverty worldwide.

## Congress Should Approve The Free Trade Agreement With Colombia

**For the sake of America's economy and national security, Congress should approve the vital free trade agreement with Colombia.** Both houses of the Colombian legislature have expressed overwhelming support for the trade agreement with the United States. Now it is Congress' turn to support a key ally and expand opportunities in both our nations by approving this important agreement.

**Today, most Colombian products enter the United States duty-free. The Colombia free trade agreement will level the playing field and help U.S. companies that export to Colombia find new buyers and be able to compete in the Colombian market.** Over 90 percent of U.S. imports from Colombia now enter our country duty-free. This agreement will finally allow U.S. companies and farmers to have duty-free access to the Colombian market. Once implemented, it will immediately eliminate tariffs on more than 80 percent of American exports of industrial and consumer goods, and it will provide significant new duty-free access for American agricultural commodities.

**Colombia is our fifth largest trading partner in Latin America.** Colombia is the largest market for U.S. agriculture exports in South America.

**Colombia has proven itself worthy of America's support.** In recent years, Colombia's democratically elected president has taken courageous steps to stop drug traffickers, rein in illegal armed groups, including paramilitaries, and enforce the law. Since 2000, kidnappings, terrorist attacks, and murders in Colombia have all dropped substantially, while convictions have increased and Colombia has extradited hundreds of drug traffickers and terrorists for prosecution in the United States. With Colombian support and commitment, our rule of law and counterdrug assistance will continue to make a difference. The free trade agreement provides an opportunity for the U.S.-Colombia relationship to expand benefits for the American people.

- **President Uribe has responded decisively to concerns over violence and impunity in Colombia, particularly attacks on trade unionists.** President Uribe has established an independent prosecutors unit to investigate and pursue charges against those accused of homicides against labor unionists. He has allowed the International Labor Organization to station a permanent representative in Bogotá. He has also worked to help create an economy in which Colombians have better alternatives to a life of violence and drugs – including the new jobs and economic opportunities that would come from a trade agreement with the U.S.
- **The Colombian government has stepped up efforts to reduce violence throughout the country.** Since 2001, kidnappings have decreased by 76 percent, terror attacks by 61 percent, and homicides by 40 percent. Additionally, violence against trade unionists, among other groups, has dropped significantly.
- **Colombia has vastly expanded its police presence as part of an effort to bring security and stability to all of its territory.** Colombia has established a police presence in each of its 1,099 municipalities, which has secured 187 primary and secondary roads throughout the country, freeing Colombians to use these roads without fear of attack. As a result, traffic along these roads has doubled since 2002, and commerce is flowing between areas that were once virtually cut off due to violence.
- **The Colombian government is continuing to battle narcotics trafficking, which provides the funding base for illegal armed groups.** These efforts took 500 metric tons of cocaine off the market in 2006 alone, depriving terrorist groups of \$850 million in funds to buy arms and mount attacks. In addition, the Colombian government has extradited over 450 narcotics traffickers and terrorists to the United States over the past five years.

#### **Approving The U.S.-Panama Free Trade Agreement Will Level The Playing Field For U.S. Business And Agriculture**

**In 2006, Panama and the United States exchanged around \$3 billion worth of goods – nearly 50 percent more than just four years ago.** Panama has one of the fastest-growing economies in Central America, with a growth rate of more than eight percent last year.

**The U.S.-Panama free trade agreement will build on this vibrant trade relationship, immediately eliminating tariffs on 88 percent of U.S. industrial and consumer goods exports to Panama.** It will provide significant new duty-free access for American farmers and ranchers, and create opportunities for American businesses to participate in the Panama Canal expansion project. It will also provide new market access for U.S. service suppliers, including in Panama's key financial services sector.

## **Approving The U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement Will Give America's Workers And Farmers Access To A Large And Growing Market**

**The President will continue to work closely with Congress to approve a landmark free trade agreement with South Korea.** This agreement would create better jobs and opportunities on both sides of the Pacific and strengthen our relationship with a democratic ally in a critical part of the world. The President urges Congress to act quickly to approve this agreement.

- **The U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) is the most commercially significant bilateral free trade agreement the United States has concluded in over 15 years.** The KORUS FTA will open a growing market of 49 million consumers to the full range of U.S. goods and services, from autos to telecommunications services. The U.S. International Trade Commission estimates the reduction of Korean tariffs and tariff-rate quota provisions on goods market access alone would add \$10-12 billion to annual U.S. GDP, meaning more jobs for hard-working Americans.
- **The KORUS FTA will eliminate tariffs on 94 percent of trade in industrial goods within three years, and more than half of U.S. agriculture exports to Korea will become duty free immediately.** The free trade agreement will also address a range of non-tariff barriers, and increase transparency in Korea's regulatory processes. The agreement will strengthen Korea's economic reforms that have helped it become a prosperous economy and vibrant democracy and sustain the growth of trade and investment opportunities for the mutual benefit of both countries.

**The agreement will strengthen the United States' competitive position in the rapidly transforming Asian market and cement ties with a vital regional ally.** The U.S.-Korean alliance was forged in war more than a half century ago. The KORUS FTA will strengthen that alliance with shared prosperity.