



Straight To The Point ...

President Bush: Free Trade Agreements Are "Good For Our Economy"

President Bush Promises Additional Action On The Economy If Needed, And Calls For "A Vote On Colombia This Year"

"And during this time of economic uncertainty, when consumer spending and investment is slowing down, it's important to understand the role trade has made for our economy. Last year exports accounted for more than 40 percent of our total growth. That's good news. Export is continuing. This January, exports were up more than 16 percent over last January. If you're worried about the economy, it seems like you ought to be sending a clear signal that the United States of America will continue to trade, not shut down trade. And that's what this Colombia vote says."

– President George W. Bush, 3/18/08

"In The Long Run, Americans Ought To Have Confidence In Our Economy"

President Bush: "This is a challenging time for our economy. ... [T]he key is to recognize problems and to act early, which we have done." "In the short run, the strains on the economy have been caused by the turmoil in the housing market, which has required focused and decisive action. And that's exactly what the federal government is doing."

(President George W. Bush, Remarks On Trade Policy, Jacksonville, FL, 3/18/08)

- **"[W]e brought together what's called the HOPE NOW Alliance."** "It's a private sector group that is helping large numbers of homeowners refinance their mortgages. We want to help people stay in their homes. And millions of people are going to be affected by this program. And it makes sense to help some person who is creditworthy find the capacity and understand where to refinance."
- **"We also worked with Congress ... to pass a bipartisan economic growth package."** "[I]n the second week of May, there is a substantial amount of money being returned to people in the hopes of encouraging increased consumption. There's also incentives in this piece of legislation passed by both Republicans and Democrats that will encourage small and large businesses to invest. ... And the experts tell me this is going to help with the economic vitality of the country."
- **"[T]he Federal Reserve and the Treasury acted swiftly to promote stability in our financial markets at a crucial time."** "It was action that was necessary. And I appreciate the leadership of Chairman Bernanke and Secretary Paulson. And they'll continue to closely monitor the markets and the financial sector."
- **"[I]f there needs to be further action we'll take it, in a way that does not damage the long-term health of our economy."**

President Bush: "[T]here are some anchors that ... that should promote long-term confidence." "First of all, the unemployment rate is relatively low. We've got a low unemployment rate here in Florida. It's low in most parts of the country. ... There are new technologies being developed. Productivity is on the rise. We have a strong agricultural sector. The small business sector is vibrant. And people are investing in the United States. And so I understand there's short-term difficulty. But I want people to understand that in the long term we're going to be just fine."

- "[O]ne of the interesting signs of strength is that we're the world's leading exporter of goods and services."

Trade Is "Economically A Good Deal For Our Country"

President Bush: "They estimate this will help 9,000 U.S. companies export to Colombia, most of which are small and mid-sized companies." "Level the playing field is going to help hundreds of thousands of employees who work at these companies."

President Bush: "These agreements are important to enhance our friendship, but these are good for our economy." "[O]nce Congress approves the free trade agreement with Colombia, then they can approve one with Panama. And once they finish one with Panama, then they can do one with South Korea."

- "[R]ather than resort to protectionism ... why don't we resort to education, to give people the skills necessary to fill the jobs for the 21st century here in the United States of America?" "That's why my budget requests \$3 billion to educate and prepare workers for the 21st century. I'm a big believer, Governor, in community colleges. I think our community colleges are great places for people to gain the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century."
- "[I]t's important that trade adjustment be a component of our trade policy." "I look forward to working with Congress to reform ... and to reauthorize [Trade Adjustment Assistance], to make sure it does the job that it ... is supposed to do."

"We Have Worked Closely With Leaders In Congress To Seek A Path To Bring The Colombia Agreement Up For Approval"

President Bush: "There must be a vote on Colombia this year. And this agreement is too important to be delayed any longer." "So I am reiterating my call on leaders in Congress to act with urgency. I ask members of both parties to ensure that politics do not get in the way of a vital priority for our nation."

- "If Congress can find a way to vote on and improve the Peru agreement, there's no reason it can't do the same for Colombia." "If members of Congress truly want Colombia to make further progress, then it makes no sense to block the very measure that would make progress more likely."
- "[I]t's an important vote for the United States Congress to understand. It's in our national security interests and economic security interests." "[A]cross the hemisphere and across the globe, people are waiting to see what the members of Congress will do."

"This Trade Agreement Is The Way To Signal Our Strong Support For President Uribe"

President Bush: "President Uribe has been an unshakeable partner for the United States." "He's answered hundreds of requests to extradite criminals to our country. And with the assistance from Plan Colombia, a program first supported by

President Bill Clinton, and continued under my administration, he's cracked down on drug trafficking. He constantly speaks out against anti-Americanism. By any measure, he has been one of our most reliable and effective allies."

- **"President Uribe has remained focused on strengthening Colombia's democracy."** "Over the past six years, kidnappings, terrorist attacks and murders of labor activists have all dropped by more than 75 percent. Police are on the streets. Tens of thousands of paramilitary fighters have been demobilized, and Colombia's murder rate has fallen substantially."
- **"Colombia's economy has shown strong growth."** "Poverty and unemployment have declined; trade and investment have increased substantially. That's what we want. We want less violence in our neighborhood, and more prosperity in our neighborhood. We want our neighbors to be prosperous."
- **"[T]his trade agreement is the way to signal our strong support for President Uribe. It's the way to help this country develop more momentum toward peace."**