



Opening Statement of Chairman Sam Graves
Committee on Small Business
U.S. Trade Strategy: What's Next for Small Business Exporters?
May 16, 2012

Good afternoon. This hearing will come to order.

I want to thank our witnesses on both panels for being here today. We look forward to your testimony.

As we celebrate World Trade Month, it is only fitting to have the Deputy United States Trade Representative before the Committee to discuss the Administration's trade strategy. First, I appreciate your effort to expedite the implementation of the free trade agreements with Korea and Colombia - which just went into effect yesterday. I hope the FTA with Panama quickly follows. The certainty and protections provided by these agreements will help thousands of small firms increase their sales, grow their business, and ultimately create more jobs.

Small businesses rely heavily on negotiated agreements to remove trade barriers and to be competitive in the global marketplace. Unlike large corporations, most small firms do not have the personnel and resources to navigate technical trade barriers. As a result, many either do not export, or only export to a few countries. Given the right circumstances and tools, I know America's small businesses can do better. We must provide small businesses with the resources necessary to increase their exports.

That means we need an aggressive trade strategy to open new markets, streamline the trade process, and combat unfair trade practices. As we have heard, the President's goal to double exports by 2014 puts small businesses as the number one priority. While I applaud this effort, we have yet to see a real strategy. Small firms, and the U.S. economy, cannot wait another 5 years for the next trade agreement.

This Committee has made increasing exports a priority. That is why I recently introduced the Export Coordination Act of 2012 to make the export process more efficient, while reducing duplication and wasteful spending of federal trade promotion agencies. I look forward to working with the Administration on identifying ways to improve the system.

Today we'll hear from the Ambassador on the status of current trade negotiations and what's next for small business exporters. Then a distinguished panel of private businesses will provide their insight on what we can do in Washington to help them be competitive.

Again, I want to thank our witnesses for their participation. I now yield to our Ranking Member for her opening remarks.