



New
Democrat
Coalition

Rep. Joseph Crowley, Chair
Rep. Jim Himes, Vice-Chair
Rep. Ron Kind, Vice-Chair
Rep. Rick Larsen, Vice-Chair
Rep. Allyson Schwartz, Vice-Chair

April 1, 2010

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

As members of the New Democrat Coalition, we believe America needs a strong and proactive trade agenda to maintain our leadership in the global economy. By engaging globally we can expand opportunities for American businesses and workers, bolster economic growth and strengthen our national security.

An essential part of a comprehensive approach to trade is pursuing passage of completed trade agreements with our allies and trade partners. Trade, especially when reciprocal and enforceable with a close trading partner, is integral to our economic recovery strategy. In 2008 and 2009, American manufacturers experienced a trade surplus of \$47 billion for their goods with the 17 countries with whom the U.S. has free trade agreements in place. In contrast, our manufacturers experienced a trade deficit of \$823 billion for their goods with the 214 countries with whom we do not have free trade agreements in place. New Democrats believe that trade agreements can be important tools in breaking down trade barriers for U.S. goods and services and aid in our economic recovery. We also understand that trade is good not only for our domestic economy, but it has the potential to benefit the developing world while promoting positive national security gains.

For these reasons, we applaud the Administration's commitment to passage of the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (KORUS). KORUS presents a unique opportunity to strengthen commercial ties with a key Democratic ally and create new opportunities for American businesses and workers. We agree with you that "this alliance is the lynchpin of not only security for the Republic of Korea and the United States but also for the Pacific region as a whole." We appreciate your commitment to send this agreement to Congress in the coming weeks and we look forward to working with you to ensure its passage.

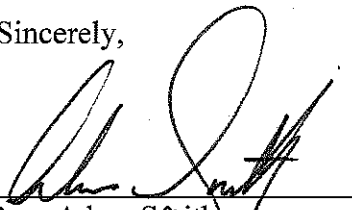
Similarly, we believe it is essential that the U.S. move forward towards passage this year on remaining bilateral agreements with Panama and Colombia, both of which are critical for our economic and security interests. Not only is Panama one of the Latin American countries with which the U.S. has a current trade surplus, but this agreement incorporates strong new Democratic labor and environmental standards that were reached as part of the bipartisan May 10, 2007, agreement. As New Democrats, we were especially proud to have helped reach this bipartisan agreement. Furthermore, Panama recently took a strong step to allay previous concerns over its tax regime by signing a bilateral tax information exchange agreement.

In the case of Colombia, the U.S. has a clear strategic interest in promoting strong economic ties with our ally to counter destabilizing forces in the region. With U.S. assistance and trade preferences for this region under the Andean Trade Preference Act (ATPA), the Colombian people have been able to achieve solid progress in promoting economic growth and social development and in reducing violence and illegal activities. The progress Colombia has made is real, but we understand challenges remain. We believe that the U.S. and the Santos Administration should continue to place a high priority on making progress to strengthen the rule of law, ensure justice and protect human rights, including those of labor, in Colombia. The U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement is a critical tool to provide jobs and economic alternatives to violence. This agreement is also extremely important to reduce tariff and nontariff barriers for U.S. goods and services, including provisions for U.S. farmers and ranchers, by immediately eliminating duties on many U.S. products. We are confident that we can continue to work together to ensure that any outstanding questions can be quickly and positively addressed.

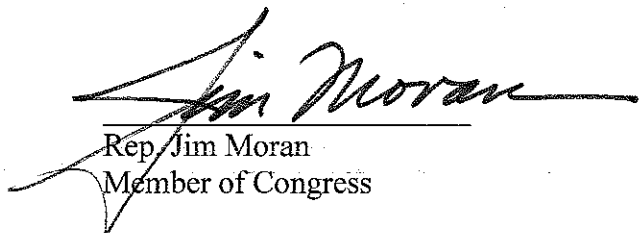
Time is of the essence. Other nations have not hesitated to move forward aggressively on their own trade-barrier reducing treaties. In the meantime, U.S. farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, and service providers will continue to face significant trade barriers and will be forced to adjust to rules that put us at a competitive disadvantage.

We are hopeful that with your leadership America we will see movement on these pending agreements in a manner that expands the pool of beneficiaries of trade and ensures that the U.S. maintains its engagement and competitive edge in global commerce. We look forward to working with you to make our common goals a reality.

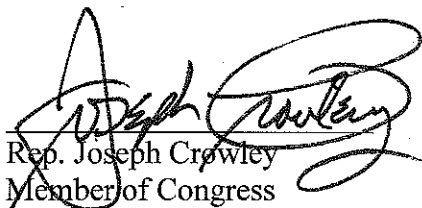
Sincerely,



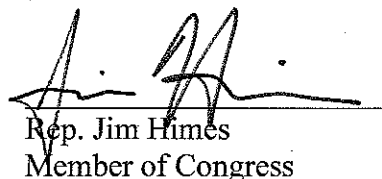
Rep. Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Rep. Jim Moran
Member of Congress



Rep. Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress



Rep. Jim Himes
Member of Congress



Rep. Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Rep. Ron Kind
Member of Congress



Rep. Allyson Schwartz
Member of Congress