



**August 15, 2007**

Editorial

## **Approve trade deals around the Pacific**

Washington's delegation in Congress should support the trade agreements that have been signed with Peru, Colombia, Panama and South Korea.

These agreements include enforceable labor and environmental standards. They do not guarantee American standards of pay, benefits and working conditions, and they do not impose American environmental laws, because that is neither possible nor reasonable. But under penalty of trade retaliation, each country promises to follow its own environmental laws. All four agreements require each country to follow whichever of seven global environmental treaties — banning trade in endangered species, for example — that country has signed, and these countries have signed most of them.

All four agreements bind each country to follow the International Labor Organization's ban on forced labor and the most serious child-labor abuses, to support the rights of employees to organize and bargain collectively, and to be free from job discrimination.

Judging from the last candidates' debate, the Democratic candidates for president have not noticed these innovations. But they were worked out in May between the Bush administration and Democratic leaders in Congress, according to U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab, who was in Seattle last week.

Most important to business and workers in Washington is the agreement with South Korea, a country directly across the Pacific from us with 49 million consumers and per-capita incomes of nearly \$20,000 a year. The agreement significantly opens Korea to sales of U.S.-manufactured goods, farm products and business and consumer services.

The agreements with Panama, Colombia and Peru are less important to business here, but they make possible a contiguous free-trade zone from the Bering Strait to the Strait of Magellan. That is worth supporting by the people of Washington, who rely on international trade more than people in any other state.

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