

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 23, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We share the goal of your National Export Initiative to double U.S. exports and are looking forward to working with you on implementing a strong trade and competitiveness strategy. We are writing to support your decision to insist that Congress agree to extend Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), including a long term extension of the 2009 bipartisan reforms, before you submit the pending trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia, and Panama. We recognize, as you do, that such a deal will be challenging to secure because it requires significant bipartisan commitments in both chambers of Congress to vote in favor of a TAA extension. The challenge is worth it. We agree with you that strengthening the safety net for the middle class by extending TAA should be a prerequisite for the consideration of new trade agreements

TAA has been a core pillar of U.S. trade policy. The program ensures that workers who lose their jobs and financial security as a result of globalization have an opportunity to transition to new jobs and emerging sectors of the economy. Important reforms were made to TAA in 2009, which have helped streamline the program and make it more efficient for beneficiaries. In 2009, Congress also expanded eligibility to all workers whose jobs have been moved offshore, regardless of whether the United States has a trade agreement with the particular country. It also recognized the important role of the service industry in the U.S. economy by bringing service workers into TAA.

The program also improved and expanded access to TAA's Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC) – an initiative that promotes private health insurance access for recipients, and makes health insurance coverage more affordable to workers who lose their jobs due to trade and offshoring. In the absence of this program, more Americans would need public assistance and more individuals nearing retirement would be forced to use the emergency room as their sole source of health care.

These bipartisan reforms to the TAA program help hundreds of thousands of workers, in every state, by moving workers more quickly from government support to private sector jobs. Since TAA reforms began in May 2009, the program has assisted 185,000 Americans who may have otherwise been ineligible for services. The 2009 reforms also help ensure accountability and results by requiring data on performance and worker outcomes, enabling Congress to identify where improvements are needed. Unfortunately, these critical TAA reforms expired on February 12, 2011. Just this month, the Department of Labor denied the first three petitions filed by groups of workers seeking TAA assistance under pre-2009 eligibility. The continued denial of critical training will impede private sector employment in emerging sectors of the economy.

While we the undersigned may have differing views on elements of the trade agenda – with some of us looking forward to supporting the pending trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia, and Panama, and others skeptical of the impact of the agreements –we are unified in our belief that the first order of business, before we should consider any FTA, is securing a long-term TAA extension.

We look forward to working with you to extend and implement TAA as part of a broader trade and competitiveness strategy that creates jobs and builds the middle class.

Sincerely,

Sharon Brown Debbie Stanton Bob Carey, Jr.
Jay Ruppelle Mike Ray
Peggy Murray Chuck Sch Jim Sullivan
Tom Hank Ben Card Carlson
Brian Bof Kirsten E. Gillibrand Maria Cantwell
Kent Lamm Tom Udare Michael Oberhel
Jack Reed Rabert Menendez Whitman

Wm F. B. All Franken Amy Klobuchar

Herb Kohl Jeffrey A. Mankoff Patrick R. Laukenberg

Mark Begich Chris Coons Jay R. Byrum

Conrad Edick Barbara Mikulski Janice Shaheen

B. Sanders Jamil X. Shakir Mauchner

Allyson Mal Udall Tom Carper

Jim Costa Tim Wirth Tim Wirth Patrick Leahy

Bill Nelson

43 Senators who Signed the Letter of Support

<u>By Order of Signatures</u>		
Sherrod Brown	Debbie Stabenow	Bob Casey Jr.
Jay Rockefeller	Jeff Bingaman	Ron Wyden
Patty Murray	Chuck Schumer	Dick Durbin
Tom Harkin	Ben Cardin	Carl Levin
Barbara Boxer	Kirsten Gillibrand	Maria Cantwell
Kent Conrad	Tom Udall	Richard Blumenthal
Jack Reed	Robert Menendez	Sheldon Whitehouse
Michael Bennet	Al Franken	Amy Klobuchar
Herb Kohl	Jeffery Merkley	Frank Lautenberg
Mark Begich	Chris Coons	Kay Hagan
Claire McCaskill	Barbara Mikulski	Jeanne Shaheen
Bernie Sanders	Daniel Akaka	Joe Manchin
Daniel Inouye	Mark Udall	Tom Carper
Jim Tester	Diane Feinstein	Patrick Leahy
Bill Nelson		

<u>By Last Name</u>		
<u>First</u>	<u>Last</u>	<u>State</u>
Daniel	Akaka	(D-HI)
Mark	Begich	(D-AK)
Michael	Bennet	(D-CO)
Jeff	Bingaman	(D-NM)
Richard	Blumenthal	(D-CT)
Barbara	Boxer	(D-CA)
Sherrod	Brown	(D-OH)
Maria	Cantwell	(D-WA)
Ben	Cardin	(D-MD)
Tom	Carper	(D-DE)
Robert P.	Casey Jr.	(D-PA)
Kent	Conrad	(D-ND)
Chris	Coons	(D-DE)
Dick	Durbin	(D-IL)
Dianne	Feinstein	(D-CA)
Al	Franken	(D-MN)
Kirsten	Gillibrand	(D-NY)
Kay	Hagan	(D-NC)
Tom	Harkin	(D-IA)
Daniel	Inouye	(D-HI)
Amy	Klobuchar	(D-NM)
Herb	Kohl	(D-WI)
Frank	Lautenberg	(D-NJ)
Patrick	Leahy	(D-VT)
Carl	Levin	(D-MI)
Joe	Manchin	(D-WV)
Claire	McCaskill	(D-MO)
Robert	Menendez	(D-NJ)
Jeff	Merkley	(D-OR)
Barbara	Mikulski	(D-MD)
Patty	Murray	(D-WA)
Bill	Nelson	(D-FL)
Jack	Reed	(D-RI)
Jay	Rockefeller	(D-WV)
Bernie	Sanders	(D-VT)
Chuck	Schumer	(D-NY)
Jeanne	Shaheen	(D-NH)
Debbie	Stabenow	(D-MI)
Jon	Tester	(D-MT)
Mark	Udall	(D-CO)
Tom	Udall	(D-NM)
Sheldon	Whitehouse	(D-RI)
Ron	Wyden	(D-OR)

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