

Today I participated in a Ways and Means Committee hearing on the pending trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. These trade agreements would remove barriers to U.S. exports abroad, leveling the playing field for U.S. goods and services. Northern California workers, farmers, small businesses and manufacturers stand to gain a great deal from the agreements. Passing them without further delay is a clear-cut way to create good jobs and boost economic growth. In fact, the independent U.S. International Trade Commission estimates that implementation of the three agreements would increase U.S. exports by at least \$13 billion. The Obama Administration estimates the growth in U.S. exports would in turn create 70,000 new jobs here at home, more than one-third of which would be in the agricultural sector. As one of nation's richest agricultural regions, passing these agreements would clearly lead to more export opportunities for our producers—and more jobs both on and off the farm in our communities including transportation workers, processors, packers, sales and marketing workers and other administrative staff.

At today's hearing we heard from five witnesses that represented all sectors of the U.S. economy, including a small businessman and manufacturer from California, a representative from Ford Motor Company, a rancher and farmer who currently serves as the president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, and representatives from two U.S. service companies, MetLife and FedEx. All the witnesses urged expeditious passage of the agreements noting that they would not only benefit their companies, but their entire industry. Many pointed to the fact that other nations are moving to lock in preferential access in these three markets through trade agreements of their own. This has already resulted in reduced market share for U.S. exporters into Colombia and South Korea, and the situation is only getting worse as the European Union and Canada will soon implement agreements with these nations. This means that failure to pass these market-opening agreements will result in less competitive U.S. exports and more job loss in our nation as our businesses and workers get left behind in the race to secure new markets.

Simply put, I strongly believe Congress should pass the trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea in the first six months of this year. American workers and businesses deserve action. We should be doing everything we can to boost our economy and passing the three pending agreements is a critical step in the right direction.