

NCTO Urges Congress to Ratify Pacts and Quickly Extend Andean Trade Preferences Following Agreement on Labor Issues Supports Inclusion of Strong Labor Standards in FTAs

NCTO President Cass Johnson stated, "NCTO was pleased to hear that the Administration and the Congress have reached agreement on labor issues regarding the Peru and Panama FTAs and urges Congress to ratify these agreements. NCTO has long supported the inclusion of strong labor standards in free trade agreements and looks forward to working with members of Congress to ensure that strong labor standards are included in future FTAs.

The bipartisan agreement means that Congress should quickly extend trade preferences for Colombia, which is a major and growing export market for U.S. textile products. The Andean Trade Preferences Act expires at the end of June and NCTO is very concerned that the precipitous decline in orders which occurred because of the delayed implementation of CAFTA will repeat itself for Colombia if trade preferences are not quickly extended.

The inclusion of new labor standards is a first initial step towards building a new consensus on trade. However, fundamental issues remain and must be dealt with. These include the need to take strong steps on Chinese currency manipulation, other overseas subsidies, customs enforcement and additional unfair trade practices that continue to cost American jobs."

Key Facts about U.S. Textiles

- One of the largest manufacturing employers in the United States, the overall textile sector employs nearly one million workers (909,000). Textile mills alone employ 383,000 workers.
- The 3rd largest exporter of textile products in the world – more than \$16 billion in 2005.
- Two-thirds of U.S. textile exports go to developing countries. The U.S. textile industry exports to more than 50 countries, with 20 countries buying more than \$100 million a year.
- Supplies more than 8,000 different textile products a year to the U.S. military.
- U.S. textile shipments totaled \$75 billion last year.
- Invested more than \$33 billion in new plants and equipment over the last 10 years.
- Has increased productivity by 51 percent over the last 10 years and ranks second among all industrial sectors in productivity increases.
- Textile workers earn 60% more than retail workers (\$516 a week vs. \$245) and get health care and pension benefits.

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