

Speaker of the House John Boehner
House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi
Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell

Dear Speaker Boehner; Minority Leader Pelosi; Majority Leader Reid; Minority Leader McConnell:

The United States-South Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS) is a critical step forward for American job creation and ensuring U.S. economic competitiveness in Asia. This trade agreement is also an important investment in the overall U.S.-South Korea alliance at a time when heightened tension on the Korean peninsula requires our solidarity with our allies in the South. We urge Congress to work toward passage of KORUS—and the Colombia and Panama agreements—as soon as possible.

Sixty years ago, the United States stood with the Republic of Korea in countering aggression from the communist North. That bloody conflict, which cost the lives of more than 35,000 Americans, has yet to result in a permanent peace. North Korea continues to challenge the world through its nuclear weapons programs and its recent attacks on the South have raised deep concerns in Northeast Asia. There has been a spectacular success story amidst ongoing tensions on the Korean peninsula, however. South Korea has risen to become the world's 14th largest economy, a vibrant democracy, and a valued ally for the United States in a critical region. It is currently America's 7th largest trading partner and 7th largest export market.

KORUS—the most economically significant trade agreement (FTA) negotiated by the United States in over 15 years—would boost U.S. goods exports by up to \$11 billion dollars and U.S. GDP by nearly \$12 billion, according to the independent, nonpartisan U.S. International Trade Commission. The agreement would create as many as 70,000 new jobs for Americans at a time when we most need them.

Moving ahead with KORUS will be a concrete demonstration that the United States is prepared to lead on trade in Asia, a signal that all of our partners in the region want to see. We cannot afford to wait on the sidelines while the region pursues agreements that leave us out. The economies of Asia are in the process of integration and are now trading more with each other than they are with the United States. Less than a decade ago, the United States was by far South Korea's leading trading partner. Now, we are competing with the European Union for third place, after China and Japan. With South Korea set to implement an FTA with the European Union in July, we can expect to fall to fourth place, and American farmers, manufacturers, and service providers will be the losers.

While creating new American jobs, KORUS will reinforce the full partnership we have with South Korea, a key Asian ally that shares our belief in democracy and has provided significant military and economic support in the Middle East and Afghanistan. Furthermore, KORUS will have positive strategic effects that will resonate beyond the Korean peninsula. The agreement with South Korea will prompt further trade liberalization and stand as a new anchor for our longstanding leadership position in a rapidly changing Asia.

For all of the foregoing reasons, we urge you to act on KORUS—and the Colombia and Panama agreements—as soon as possible. Congressional approval and implementation of all of these agreements will bring real benefits for U.S. workers, farmers, and businesses and will help maintain America’s leadership position in an increasingly competitive global environment.

We urge Congress to act swiftly.

Respectfully yours,

Signatories:

Former U.S. Secretary of State:

The Honorable George Shultz 1982-1989 (also former Secretary of the Treasury, OMB Director and Secretary of Labor)

The Honorable Madeleine Albright 1997-2001 (also former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations)

The Honorable Colin Powell 2001-2005 (also former Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff and National Security Advisor)

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice 2005-2009 (also former National Security Advisor)

Former U.S. Secretary of Defense:

The Honorable William Perry 1994-1997

The Honorable William Cohen 1997-2001 (also former Senator and Congressman)

Former White House Chief of Staff:

The Honorable Howard Baker 1987-1988 (also former Senator, Senate Majority Leader)

The Honorable Kenneth Duberstein 1988-1989

The Honorable Thomas McLarty 1996-1998

The Honorable Andrew Card 2001-2006 (also former Secretary of Transportation)

Former National Security Advisor:

The Honorable Samuel Berger 1997-2001

The Honorable Stephen Hadley 2005-2009

The Honorable James Jones 2009-2010

Former Commander-in-Chief of the UN Command, Republic of Korea /United States Combined Forces Command /United States Forces Korea:

General Robert RisCassi 1992-1993

General John Tilelli, Jr. 1996-1999

General Leon LaPorte 2003-2006

Former United States Trade Representative:

The Honorable William Brock 1981-1985 (also former Senator, Congressman, Secretary of Labor)

The Honorable Clayton Yeutter 1985-1989 (also former Secretary of Agriculture)

The Honorable Carla Hills 1989-1993 (also former Secretary of HUD)

The Honorable Mickey Kantor 1993-1996 (also former Secretary of Commerce)

The Honorable Charlene Barshefsky 1996-2001

The Honorable Susan Schwab 2006-2009

Former Ambassadors:

The Honorable Donald Gregg (Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, 1989-1993)

The Honorable James Laney (Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, 1993-1997)

The Honorable Wendy Sherman (Counselor & Policy Coordinator for North Korea, 1997-2001)

The Honorable Thomas Hubbard (Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, 2001-2004)

The Honorable Christopher Hill (Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, 2004-2005)