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May 23, 2011

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. President, Majority Leader Reid, Speaker Boehner, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

In an ever-competitive, global economy, it is important that the United States act on new and expanded trade agreements in order to achieve greater economic prosperity through international trade. Three such agreements appear to be near at hand and we offer bipartisan support for the South Korean, Colombian, and Panamanian trade agreements. In addition, we also encourage support for the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program and urge Congress to once again grant fast-track trade negotiation authority to the President.

As the chief executives of our respective states and territories, we appreciate how important international trade and investment are to the economic vitality of our jurisdictions, presenting important opportunities for workers, and enhancing our overall competitiveness. Export-related jobs pay better than non-exporting industries and, with nearly 95 percent of the world's consumers living outside of the U.S., exports have been the focus of increased job growth in recent years. Much of the improvement in our nation's trade balance can be linked to the enactment of several free trade agreements (e.g., Chile, Singapore, Australia, Israel, and Jordan), thus our belief in an aggressive expansion of foreign markets for U.S. goods and services beginning with South Korea, Colombia, and Panama.

We must think holistically about international trade and recognize that world trade can cause economic adjustments that require training and temporary support to individuals in impacted industries. As such, the TAA program, which was first established in 1963, is a critical program to move in tandem with free trade agreements in order to help American workers adapt to changes in the global marketplace and assist them in securing new opportunities in which they can excel.

Since 1974, Congress has granted every U.S. President fast-track trade negotiation authority. President Obama should hold the same authority to conclude complex trade agreements in a timely manner that can keep pace with our global competitors. Without fast-track authority, the United States' ability to expand and open markets around the world is constrained significantly, and U.S. businesses and agricultural producers will likely lose market opportunities and jobs to other countries.

Strong bipartisan leadership is needed to create opportunities for America's workers. We stand ready to further support you in those efforts.

Sincerely,

Governor Robert Bentley
Alabama

Governor Mike Beebe
Arkansas

Governor John Hickenlooper
Colorado

Governor Dan Malloy
Connecticut

Governor Nathan Deal
Georgia

Governor Eddie Calvo
Guam

Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter
Idaho

Governor Mitch Daniels
Indiana

Governor Terry E. Branstad
Iowa

Governor Sam Brownback
Kansas

Governor Paul R. LePage
Maine

Governor Rick Snyder
Michigan

Governor Haley Barbour
Mississippi

Governor Dave Heineman
Nebraska

Governor Brian Sandoval
Nevada

Governor Mary Fallin
Oklahoma

Governor Luis G. Fortuño
Puerto Rico

Governor Dennis Daugaard
South Dakota

Governor Christine O. Gregoire
Washington

Governor Matthew Mead
Wyoming

Governor Chris Christie
New Jersey

Governor John A. Kitzhaber, M.D.
Oregon

Governor Lincoln Chafee
Rhode Island

Governor Gary R. Herbert
Utah

Governor Scott Walker
Wisconsin

cc: Ambassador Ron Kirk