

# Committee on Ways and Means

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 5, 2001

Contact: Press Office  
202-225-8933

## Opening Statement of Chairman Bill Thomas Markup of H.R. 3005 "The Bipartisan Trade Promotion Authority Act of 2001"

### *As prepared for delivery*

Today the Committee considers four trade bills that together send a powerful signal that America is open for business.

International trade matters to America. Our country's greatness is rooted in its economic strength, and that strength depends on an unimpeded ability to compete fairly in international markets.

H.R. 3005, the Bipartisan Trade Promotion Authority Act of 2001, symbolizes the force of our commitment to American business that they will have a fair chance to compete and win. Arming our President with the ability to negotiate trade agreements that receive an up or down vote in Congress offers the best and most equitable way to achieve this.

When nations open their borders to trade, all parties benefit. We see the evidence of that success within our own borders: Hondas, Toyotas and Mercedes built by American workers drive on our roads. A wide selection of attractive goods at reasonable prices line our store shelves. One of every four dollars in the U.S. economy is linked to trade; twelve million Americans owe their jobs to exports.

Since the President's authority lapsed in 1994, the United States has failed to implement a single free trade agreement with any nation. Over 130 such agreements are in place worldwide; we are a party to three of them. *Three*. While doors in Latin America, Asia and Europe are opened to our competitors, they are slammed in our face.

Each agreement excluding the United States represents an opportunity lost for American business. TPA will help create new markets for our farmers and ranchers, manufacturers and service providers, and high-tech entrepreneurs. Competition breeds innovation. Free trade will fuel the engines of economic growth that create new jobs and new income here and abroad. America's influence will reach farther beyond our borders, motivating other nations to reform their economies and offer greater freedom to their people.

This carefully crafted and well-balanced compromise is the product of months of hard work by Members from both parties. It is truly a bipartisan bill. It addresses key Member concerns through a strong framework and clear negotiating objectives.

The compromise achieves several fundamental goals:

- It includes a negotiating objective to ensure that countries enforce their own labor and environmental standards.
- It preserves U.S. sovereignty.
- It has a strong framework for enforcement.
- It preserves the role of Congress in approving trade agreements through an extensive consultation process before, during and after negotiations.

This bipartisan compromise will enhance our nation's ability to compete and win in the global market. Its passage is an urgent priority, for the President and for the nation.

The other three bills before us today all contribute to an environment that nourishes free and fair trade.

H.R. 3009, the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act, allows the President to consider Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia and Peru as recipients of duty-free treatment. The bill brings together the critical issues of free trade and the fight against drug production and trafficking.

ATPA encourages viable alternatives to trade in drugs. Following the bill's enactment in 1991, trade between the US and these four countries doubled, with drug production declining as exports of non-traditional agricultural products and manufactured goods expanded. At the same time, U.S. exports to the four countries grew by 66 percent. This is free trade in action.

H.R. 3010 would extend the Generalized System of Preferences until December 31, 2002, continuing the President's authority to provide unilateral, duty-free treatment to about 6200 articles from over 140 developing nations, supporting their further economic progress.

For all the benefits free trade brings to our society and beyond, some workers may require retraining in order to contribute fully. During that training and subsequent job search, they may need more direct assistance than states routinely provide. Similarly, firms need assistance in making the strategic adjustments necessary to remain competitive in a global economy. H.R. 3008, the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act, continues this trade adjustment assistance for another two years, offering coverage to some 163,000 workers, mainly in the apparel and textile, oil and gas electronics and metal/machinery industries.

Together these four bills offer a balanced approach to maintaining America's economic strength.

###