trade thoroughfare for the United States and the world.

And finally, the Colombia free trade agreement, which was a vote that took even greater deliberation.

Colombia is a strong U.S. ally in Latin America and is a critical regional and global partner. Colombia's market is the third largest for the United States in Latin America and U.S. producers have been losing market share quickly as the Colombians strengthen economic ties with Canada, the European Union and the Mercosur countries of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. As other countries facilitate trade with Colombia, American producers have faced continued tariffs on goods exported to Colombia, while Colombian goods face few tariffs into the United States. Currently, the average U.S. tariff on the few Colombian goods subject to a tariff is 3 percent. Colombia's average tariff on U.S. exported goods is 12.5 percent. This agreement will increase market access for U.S. goods and services in Colombia by immediately eliminating duties on 80 percent of U.S. exports to Colombia, with all remaining tariffs eliminated within 10 years.

These numbers show why American businesses have been eager to level the playing field with foreign competitors that have benefited from preferential tariff treatment in Colombia. Still, there have been long-standing concerns with Colombia's history of violence and its human rights record, issues that deeply concern not only me, but many Coloradans. I have looked to Colombia and supporters of this agreement to make the case that adequate progress has been made to determine if the United States should move forward with a trade agreement at this time.

The Colombian and U.S. governments, as well as organizations that have opposed and supported the agreement, acknowledge the problematic record Colombia has had on human rights and labor protections. Most agree that progress has been made, though many disagree to what extent that progress has improved labor conditions and lessened human rights violations. After meeting with groups on both sides of this debate, I concluded that maintaining the status quo was not the best answer. Leaving things as they are now would not create any more incentives for Colombia to maintain or further cultivate its commitment to resolving issues of violence. Nor do I believe that the status quo would strengthen the ties with this key ally in South America. I ultimately believe that the recent labor and legal reforms in Colombia represent concrete steps in the right direction. The commitment of Colombia's political leadership to improving its record is also an indication that Colombia can move beyond its past. The primary objective is for our two countries not only to maintain the shared goal of reducing violence and protecting workers' rights, but also to become stronger economic partners, enabling American business to compete in Colombia's market on a level playing field with our international competitors. Both of these goals help justify moving beyond the status quo.

Let me be clear: we must continue to work collaboratively with the Colombian government to ensure that the appropriate steps are taken toward responsible and meaningful reforms. A meaningful step in this direction is President Obama's commitment to allow the agreement to enter into force only when Colombia has sufficiently met predetermined benchmarks. These benchmarks include efforts to increase protection of labor activists, enforce core labor rights and reduce impunity for perpetrators of violence against union members. Additionally, the underlying agreement includes strong labor provisions that protect the right to organize, the right to bargain collectively, and to provide protections against forced labor, child labor, and employment discrimination.

These changes may not all happen overnight, but we can ensure that what remains to be fixed will be supported by our strengthened economic relationship and the social and economic incentives for Colombia to maintain a positive trajectory in reducing violence. Does the passage of this agreement mean that all of the ills facing Colombia will be cured? I make no such assumption, and I know it will take work and diligent oversight. The burden will be on the Colombian government to follow through on promised reforms and ensure they have the intended effect. It will also be up to this administration to ensure that the benchmarks laid out in its labor action plan are met to the greatest extent possible and that Colombia continues to meet these goals. Finally, it will be up to Congress to provide ongoing oversight to ensure everyone is meeting their responsibilities. I, for one, will be watching.

In addition to these agreements, I note briefly that Congress came together in a bipartisan manner to reauthorize a robust Trade Adjustment Assistance Program that will assist workers, firms and farmers to retrain and retool so they can better compete in the global economy. This was a necessary precursor to my support of these three free trade agreements.

In sum, the free trade agreements with Korea, Panama, and Colombia, while not perfect, present strong opportunities for Colorado and U.S. businesses while also including some of the most robust labor and environmental provisions that we have ever had in a trade agreement with any country. Trade issues are never clear cut, but simply put, trading with our neighbors and partners can help our economy when we set the terms fairly and find balance. By helping to ensure that our trading partners play by fair rules, and by opening foreign markets for U.S. products, the United States is better positioned to win the global economic race.

JOHANSON CONFIRMATION

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, last night the Senate confirmed David Johanson as a member of the International Trade Commission. I would like to take a moment to congratulate David on his confirmation. The ITC administers the Nation's trade remedy laws and provides Congress with independent analysis and information on matters relating to international trade. I am confident that the International Trade Commission will benefit greatly from David's intelligence, experience and extraordinary work ethic.

David has served as International Trade Counsel to the Senate Finance Committee since 2003, first under the leadership of Senator GRASSLEY and now with me as ranking member. With his help, the committee accomplished much in those 8 years. Under President Bush, we renewed trade promotion authority and worked together to pass trade agreements with 14 countries agreements that helped to grow the U.S. economy, increase exports, and create American jobs. We also used that trade promotion authority to negotiate and pass our trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Panama.

Much of the focus of David's work on the Finance Committee has been on agricultural issues. These are often some of the most contentious issues in international trade, but David proved himself to be a tireless and effective advocate for U.S. exports. With his help, this Committee was able to reopen important international markets for American agricultural products, including the critical Chinese market.

In closing, David will bring 15 years of experience in the field of international trade law, an extraordinary work ethic, meticulous attention to detail and pragmatic creativity to his new role as a member of the International Trade Commission. We wish him well on this next phase of his career and thank him for all of the great work that he has done in the U.S. Senate.

FORT MONROE NATIONAL PARK

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, today marks the start of an exciting new chapter for Fort Monroe in Hampton, VA. I welcome the President's decision to use his authority under the Antiquities Act to protect this special place by declaring it a national monument and the country's 396th National Park unit. A National Park Service presence will ensure that we can properly preserve this historic, natural and recreational resource for the benefit of present and future generations.

On this important occasion, I recognize the effort that has gone towards establishing a National Park unit at Fort Monroe. I have been fortunate to