

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

Message to the Congress Transmitting Legislation To Implement the United States-South Korea Free Trade Agreement

October 3, 2011

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit legislation and supporting documents to implement the United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement (Agreement), a landmark agreement that supports American jobs, advances U.S. interests, and reflects America's fundamental values.

The Agreement levels the playing field for U.S. businesses, workers, farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, investors, and service providers by offering them unprecedented access to Korea's nearly \$1 trillion economy. The Agreement eliminates tariffs on over 95 percent of U.S. exports of industrial and consumer goods to Korea within the first 5 years and, together with the agreement entered into through an exchange of letters in February 2011, addresses key outstanding concerns of American automakers and workers regarding the lack of a level playing field in Korea's auto market. The Agreement also ensures that almost two-thirds of current U.S. agricultural exports will enter Korea duty-free immediately. In addition, the Agreement will give American service providers much greater access to Korea's \$580 billion services market.

The Agreement contains state of the art provisions to help protect and enforce intellectual property rights, reduce regulatory red tape, and eliminate regulatory barriers to U.S. exports. The Agreement also contains the highest standards for protecting labor rights, carrying out covered environmental agreements, and ensuring that key domestic labor and environmental laws are enforced, combined with strong remedies for noncompliance.

Increased U.S. exports expected under the Agreement will support more than 70,000 American jobs. The Agreement will bolster our economic competitiveness in the Asia-Pacific region and our regional security interests. The United States once was the top supplier of goods exported to Korea. Over the past decade, our share of Korea's import market for goods has fallen from 21 percent to just 10 percent—behind China and Japan, and barely ahead of the European Union (EU). The EU and several other trading partners are negotiating or have recently concluded trade agreements with Korea. If the United States-Korea trade agreement is not approved, the United States could lose further market share, export-supported jobs, and economic growth opportunities, with damage to our leadership position in the region.

As a part of an ambitious trade agenda, it is important that the Congress renew a strong and robust Trade Adjustment Assistance Program consistent with reforms enacted in 2009. Renewal of that program is necessary to support Americans who need training and other services when their jobs are adversely affected by trade. As we expand access to other markets abroad, we need to ensure that American workers are provided the tools needed to take advantage of these opportunities and are not left behind in the global economy.

Approving and implementing the Agreement is an opportunity to shape history. We must seize the moment together to support jobs for the American people today and to sustain U.S. leadership well into the 21st century. I urge the Congress to enact this legislation promptly.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
October 3, 2011.

Categories: Communications to Congress : South Korea-U.S. trade promotion agreement, message transmitting legislation.

Subjects: Asia : Trade with U.S.; Commerce, international : U.S. exports :: Expansion; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Job training assistance; Labor, Department of : Trade Adjustment Assistance program; South Korea : Free trade agreement with U.S.

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