

**Testimony of Senator Pat Roberts  
Before the Senate Finance Committee  
June 21, 2001  
“Presidential Trade Promotion Authority”**

I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you also, Mr. Chairman Emeritus, for the opportunity to come before you. It's a privilege to be here with my former colleagues from the House. Both Congressman Kolbe and Congressman Crane have been tireless leaders on behalf of trade and the betterment of jobs and progress, not only in this country but around the world, and I thank them for their efforts. I associate myself with the remarks by the distinguished senator from Nebraska, my good friend, Senator Hagel.

Mr. Chairman, trade is a necessary and very vital economic component for American agriculture's well-being. I have some items I'd like to list.

Ninety-six percent of the world's population lives beyond our borders. Any future recovery and potential growth for the agriculture sector – and we're in pretty tough shape in farm country and have been for the better part of three years. Any recovery is going to rely in part on our ability to trade and access to foreign markets, simply put.

World demand is growing for agriculture products. So is the competition between suppliers. Our nation's failure to secure a part of the global economy has cost our agriculture producers dearly.

Annually, as of today, we export 52 percent of our wheat – that's over half the Kansas wheat crop, half the Montana wheat crop, if, in fact, you have a wheat crop. I understand that's pretty tough out there – 48 percent of cotton, 41 percent of our rice, 33 percent of our soybeans, 21 percent of our corn that is produced nationally. That's one out of five acres in Senator Grassley's home state.

In Kansas, this translates into one-fourth to one-third of farm income being generated by trade each year, and I would guess that that percentage is almost the same for Florida and for North Dakota and for Louisiana--don't know about West Virginia--certainly in regards to Montana, Iowa, maybe not Utah, but certainly in Texas.

My state's reliance on trade certainly extends beyond agriculture. We have aircraft, we have chemicals, we have petroleum, we have metals, and many other products. Twenty thousand people in Wichita certainly work for the aircraft industry – probably more than that. I just counted the Boeing employees. So these folks also rely on exports as an important portion of their sales.

Between agriculture and manufacturing, one in four jobs in my state of Kansas depends on trade. Last year, we generated 66,000 jobs.

Now, through the last several decades, American agriculture has undergone leaps and bounds in the arenas of production technologies. It's been unbelievable. The explosion of precision agriculture and the productivity and the resulting yields have been able to feed this country in a troubled and hungry world. It's been a modern miracle, with the development of new varieties that resist disease and drought and cropping practices that certainly benefit the environment.

It's a paradox of enormous irony that while we have all this progress, all this innovation, and the modern miracle of agriculture, during the same period our share of the world's agriculture market has slipped from 23 percent to 17 percent, and it's headed downward. We're losing. We're not being competitive.

We have called the mechanism that would allow our president the ability to realistically negotiate free and fair trade agreements a variety of names. I just had a meeting yesterday with Secretary Veneman, and we've had meetings with Secretary Zoellick.

Trade promotion authority--I don't like that much, because it reflects on promotion. This is far more serious than promotion. Trade negotiating authority--perhaps that's a little better. I don't think that--let's see, the acronym is TNA. I don't know what that's going to do to--you know, the DNA on TNA doesn't work out very well.

Trade enhancement authority--enhancement? We need a stronger word. Fast track--I don't like fast track. That sort of indicates that we're trying to go around the Congress in some fashion.

I'm going to use the title used by my predecessor in the House of Representatives, The Honorable Keith Sebelius, who worked hard for farmers and ranchers for 12 years. I was his administrative assistant. He said, "Pat, you've got to export the product. You either sell it or smell it." And I don't know what that adds up to with an acronym, but that's about where we are.

So whatever we call it, I prefer that we grant the president the ability to competitively negotiate the market access for the products that our hard working farmers and ranchers certainly produce.

There are 133 trade agreements in place around the world and only two involve the United States. The president said that. Probably my preceding have said that.

If we're going to compete successfully for the export opportunities of the 21st Century, we need fair trade and fair access to the growing global markets. Without the trade promotion authority, or the "sell it, don't smell it" authority, we'll continue to fall short.

Now, I read in the "Sparks Commodity News"--and I don't mean that to be a plug for the outfit, but it's a pretty good outfit, if you want to read about agriculture--and it pretty well said this, and I'm just, you know, simply quoting here. I don't want to perjure anybody's intent or the fine work that the chairman and the chairman emeritus does or that this committee does.

But it says it, and I think it says it very well: "Senate Democrats insist on labor and environmental protections, and the Senate's new Finance Committee chairman, Max Baucus" – who is a dear friend and a colleague and a strong component of trade – "is cool to any legislation that does not have labor and environmental protections." And I think that's a pretty accurate statement in regard to some of the feelings and in regard to my colleagues across the aisle.

"Senator Chuck Grassley, ranking member, chairman emeritus on the Finance Committee, said, 'Republican leaders would seek ways to address the environmental and labor issues so they don't become protectionism.'" And I certainly agree with that.

"But he admitted if we went entirely the way that the labor leaders in America want to go" – where John Sweeney wanted to go yesterday when he testified before the panel, maybe Charlie Rangel, maybe Sander Levin. I haven't read their testimony, but I certainly heard it when we went up to see the president at the White House before he went to Canada – "...said that 'For every Democrat we would pick up, we'd lose a Republican.' However, Grassley said, 'The labor and environment provisions will be the key to crafting a bill that can gain the majority's support and I think it will have to be compromised.' As usual, Chuck Grassley certainly nailed it."

I don't know how we do this. You know, people talk about the third way. The third way in farm country is that for--let me stop and think a minute--for over 30 years, I have been making speeches in farm country, and that's why I'm here in the Congress, to do what I can on behalf of our farmers and ranchers. I've tried very hard to do that.

And there's a line in every speech, and I've written it for my predecessors and I will continue to give it: We need a consistent and aggressive export policy. Remember when Ed Zorinsky wouldn't really go along with the budget, the situation with Reagan, and we started the Export Enhancement Program? That was a shotgun kind of a program. It sure made our competitors unhappy. We haven't used that for a long time.

Berkeley Bedell from Iowa and I went down to the first meeting, because it was sort of controlled by the State Department, and I made the same speech then. Why are you putting the farmers and ranchers out there subject to all these other considerations in regard to market interference?

And my question to everybody is: We exported about \$61 billion three or four years ago in farm products. We're down to about \$50 billion today. Subtract the difference and that's the subsidy the American taxpayers are paying to the farmer. It's not exactly a one to one cause, but it certainly is reflective of the problem that we have. We are not selling our product, and we need "sell it, don't smell it" authority.

Now, I don't know how long we're going to have to make those speeches. And I will tell you, in farm country, the farmer and rancher is damn tired of it, and they don't believe us anymore. The gild is off the lily in regard to a consistent and aggressive trade policy.

Now, the president has asked us in a call to action just yesterday and in repeated meetings, let's get the job done. And I'll be happy to do it any way I possibly can in some kind of a compromise, and I apologize to the chairman. There seems to be some kind of a compromise bill here with Mr. Murkowski and Mr. Graham, and I encourage you both to do that. My staff is working with you.

But can't we get this job done, Mr. Chairman? It's long, long overdue.