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HATCH STATEMENT AT FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARING EXAMINING THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S TRADE AGENDA

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, today delivered the following opening statement at a committee hearing examining the Obama Administration's trade agenda with U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk:

I firmly believe that America benefits from an aggressive trade agenda that opens markets to U.S. products around the world. Over ninety-five percent of the world's population lives outside the United States. As these economies grow, they offer new markets and new opportunities for those willing and able to seize them.

Our workers can compete and win in these markets. I am confident of that.

We can help by negotiating good deals that tear down barriers to our products and level the playing field for our workers.

And then, we need to get out of the way.

We can't saddle our workers with burdensome regulations, high taxes and government deficits and then expect them to win in the global economy.

We must do better than that.

At the risk of sounding like a homer, to see what works all you have to do is take a look at my home state of Utah.

Sound fiscal policy, a light regulatory burden and low taxes make Utah one of the most competitive states in the nation.

Utah is the only State in the country to double exports in the last five years. Utah is leading the pack when it comes to growing jobs and expanding exports. The same sound regulatory, fiscal and tax policies that work in Utah should inform our policies here if we are to

succeed as a nation.

As Ranking Member of this Committee, I am committed to pursuing those policies.

As the White House looks for solutions to our most pressing problems, I would encourage them to look beyond Pennsylvania Avenue.

My home state of Utah is a good place to start.

As a nation, we have a lot of work to do in order to get the economy back on track. In my opinion, the administration wasted crucial time — almost two years — pursuing sideshows like stimulus spending for government jobs and health care reform, instead of taking on a pro-growth economic agenda.

As a result, unemployment remains far too high, and Congress is just now getting to an agenda that will lead to meaningful economic growth, lasting job gains, increased productivity, and the dynamic economic expansion that citizens have patiently been waiting for.

At the top of a pro-growth agenda is trade policy. Yet instead of leading the way, we are falling behind our trading partners. While we wait, other countries are writing the rules of trade. While we hesitate, other countries are opening up markets for their workers.

And if this sorry record is not corrected, U.S. workers will continue to lose out on the economic opportunities afforded by free and open trade.

A case in point: Colombia.

In 2008, the United States was the main supplier of corn, wheat and soybeans to Colombia, accounting for seventy-one percent of the market. Today, our market share is just twenty-seven percent.

It does not take a Ph.D. in economics to understand this collapse.

While our trade agreement with Colombia collected dust, other countries were surging ahead.

The same pattern holds in Panama, where we continue to lose out on lucrative government procurement projects.

Some suggest that the strong interest in quick approval of our trade agreements with Colombia and Panama is driven by partisanship.

I am not going to pull my punches here. That is false. There is strong bipartisan support for these agreements in this Committee and in the Senate.

Any further doubts can be laid to rest by a recent letter from a bipartisan group of former government officials — including USTRs, White House Envoys to the Americas, and Assistant Secretaries of State — all calling for prompt ratification of our pending trade agreements with Colombia and Panama.

Now, I appreciate the work that the Administration has done in regard to Korea.

Korea is a friend and ally of the United States.

And, while we need to see more progress on beef access, it remains a strong agreement.

I support it, and want to see it move as soon as possible.

But I don't believe the President will ever act on the Colombia and Panama agreements unless these agreements move with Korea.

This skepticism is not unjustified.

In 2009, the Administration said they were *developing a plan of action to address the pending trade agreements in consultation with Congress* and pledged to address any issues promptly.

Later, at the Summit of the Americas President Obama directed Ambassador Kirk to lead a review of the Colombia Agreement to solve outstanding issues.

In 2010 the Administration laid out general concerns but vowed to move the agreements forward at the appropriate time. A little later, they pledged to *strengthen relations with key partners...with the goal of moving forward with existing agreements in a way that upholds our values*.

Then, in 2011, President Obama vowed to pursue agreements with Panama and Colombia.

Just a month ago, the President directed USTR to immediately intensify engagement with Colombia and Panama.

And just yesterday we received testimony that says you are on track to resolve outstanding issues with Panama and are committed to addressing issues related to Colombia, both sometime this year.

Now, some might call this progress. But are we really any closer to having these agreements before Congress today than in 2009?

I find it hard to believe that the problem is a lack of information. The problem is a lack of political will, and a lack of political courage.

So far, the administration has talked a big game on these trade agreements, but when game time rolls around, they shrink from action. At some point, despite all the words, it is the administration's inaction that speaks volumes.

This failure to act raises strong doubts about whether the President is serious about moving these agreements at all. Given past rhetoric, the recent promises of *intensified engagement*, commitments to work, and being *on track* are all fine and good.

But these promises are woefully inadequate.

After two years, it is still an open question whether the President will ever see fit to submit the Colombia and Panama agreements to Congress anytime in the near future, if at all.

Let me be clear. If the President will not act, I will.

If the President ignores the will of Congress and sends the Korea agreement without Colombia and Panama I will do everything I can to make sure that those two agreements are considered at the same time as Korea.

Given the gap between promises made and promises kept, I don't believe the President has given Congress much choice when it comes to the Colombia and Panama trade agreements.

If we are to serve the national interest and get these two agreements approved, Congress must act with — or without — Presidential leadership.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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