

Senate Finance Export Promotion Hearing
‘Exports’ Place on the Path of Economic Recovery’
Wednesday, December 8, 2009

Good afternoon and thank you for calling today’s hearing. I want to thank **Chairman Wyden** and **Ranking Member Crapo** for focusing on such an important issue for our economy.

Given today’s economic realities, America’s businesses – in particular small business owners - are looking for ways to reach new customers, target new markets, and increase their exports. What many of these business owners do not know is that the Federal government offers a host of programs designed to help them increase their participation in the global economy.

These programs could provide a tremendous benefit to many of the businesses in my state, as well as the many others who rely heavily on trade.

Florida is home to **14 deepwater ports** and more than **33,000 export companies**. When you consider the fact that 1 out of every 9 manufacturing jobs is tied to trade, you can imagine how more information on programs to help small businesses would be beneficial.

In an effort to improve the way the Federal government facilitates information on trade promotion, I have joined Senator Klobuchar in urging our colleagues to include a report in the fiscal year 2010 Commerce spending bill detailing the resources available to small businesses. This would go a long way in helping our businesses increase exports and make these programs more efficient.

We have also asked that the report include specific ways for small businesses to find new customers in emerging markets such as India, Brazil, and China.

If the United States is to take a more active role in the global economy, helping our businesses compete is essential. Today, **95 percent** of the world's customers are located outside the United States, but less than **one percent** of U.S. businesses export. Mr. Chairman, the Federal government can do better. They must do better. Our economic future depends on it.

Beyond detailing existing opportunities, Congress ought to create new opportunities for American businesses by approving the pending trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and the Republic of Korea.

According to the Latin America Trade Coalition, in 2008, **more than 6,000 small and medium-sized American businesses** exported to Colombia.

If Congress were to pass the Colombia Trade Agreement, more than **80 percent** of U.S. consumer and manufacturing products and most U.S. farm goods would enter Colombia duty free.

The Colombia agreement – along with Panama and the Republic of Korea agreements – have been pending for far too long and I would urge the President and the Members of this Committee to seek their prompt consideration in Congress.

They are win-win agreements for America's small businesses and the workers they employ.

Thank you again for calling this important hearing. I look forward to working with all of you to improve and expand our nation's businesses' exporting capacity.