



For Immediate Release
Thursday, Jan. 28, 2010

Grassley Urges President to Act on Trade Expansion, Training Pledges
in State of the Union Speech

WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley today urged the President to make good on his State of the Union pledges by advancing pending trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea and funding a retraining program to help workers displaced by trade.

“In his speech, the President said exports are important to job creation, and education is necessary for U.S. workers to compete worldwide,” Grassley said. “I agree with those words. Now I’m looking for action. There are two immediate ways to advance these goals. One is for the President to send Congress implementing legislation for the three pending trade agreements that have been ready to go for years. The other is to fund a training program that will help workers get the skills they need for good jobs in the United States.”

Grassley said he wants to see funding for the Community College and Career Training Grant Program, which he drafted as part of the Trade and Globalization Adjustment Assistance Act that was included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. These grants are meant to help community colleges tailor programs to retrain workers displaced by trade to better meet the specific needs of employers in their communities. The program was authorized at \$40 million per year, but the Democratic-led Congress has yet to fund it. The President’s proposed budget this year will be his first opportunity to decide whether to recommend funding, Grassley said.

Grassley is ranking member and former chairman of the Committee on Finance, with jurisdiction over international trade. The text of Grassley’s letter to the President today follows here.

January 28, 2010

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

I am writing with respect to the State of the Union address that you delivered to Congress yesterday evening, and to follow up on my letter to you dated December 2, 2009, regarding the jobs summit that you convened at the White House on December 3rd.

I strongly support your focus on job creation and the role that increased exports can and should play in creating and sustaining good-paying jobs here in the United States. And, I commend you for highlighting the need to strengthen our trade relations with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. I therefore reiterate my urgent request that your Administration submit implementing legislation to Congress for each of these three pending trade agreements without delay. If we are to meet your call to double our exports over the next five years, we must break down foreign trade barriers and that begins with the three trade agreements at hand. At this point, these agreements represent one year and billions of dollars of lost sales opportunities for U.S. exporters since you took office. I stand ready to work with you to promptly turn this situation around and help level the playing field for U.S. businesses and their workers.

I also agree that we need to look at ways to revitalize our nation's community colleges, particularly with respect to better meeting the needs of workers who are adversely impacted by trade. That's why I included the Community College and Career Training (CCCT) Grant Program as part of the Trade and Globalization Adjustment Assistance Act that was included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. CCCT grants will help community colleges tailor programs to retrain displaced workers to better meet the specific needs of employers in their communities. With reports that firms are finding it increasingly difficult to find workers with the necessary skills to fill the advanced manufacturing jobs of tomorrow, appropriate retraining opportunities will be critically important to retaining such jobs in the United States. Although the program was authorized at \$40 million per year, it has yet to be funded. In preparing your budget for fiscal year 2011, I request that you include full funding for the CCCT program in order to meet these important goals.

Thank you for your attention to these matters, and I look forward to working with you to continue addressing the pressing needs of American workers.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member