

Trade Matters Campaign Update – FTA Deal Reached in Congress and August Recess Activities

Legislative Update

The three pending trade agreements with Korea, Colombia and Panama were not introduced before Congress adjourned for the August District Work Period. Action on the trade agreements has been complicated by the issue of whether to include Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) as part of the package and the ongoing negotiations over the debt ceiling and deficit reduction. Recent statements by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell state they have come to an agreement on how to resolve the impasse of TAA and the FTAs. The administration has stated they want to send the implementing bills and TAA to Congress in September. This announcement is critical to keeping the trade agreements moving forward.

Groups and organizations in opposition to the three FTAs are engaging their resources this month. The AFL-CIO is making opposition to the FTAs a part of a broad grassroots campaign focusing on the jobs agenda and including 450 events nationwide. Additionally, Public Citizen, a progressive group claiming 80,000 members, has organized efforts specifically targeting House members in California, Illinois, New York, Florida, North Carolina and Georgia –all delegations in which a large number of representatives remain undecided.

As state Farm Bureaus are speaking with Members of Congress and their staffs on this issue, please provide feedback on their positions to Chris Garza (chrisg@fb.org). This information will help us provide resources and messaging.

Grassroots Strategy

AFBF requests that state Farm Bureaus continue their August in-district activities on passing the FTAs. All members of Congress – those supportive, on the fence or opposing – need to hear from Farm Bureau grassroots members and leaders. Messages will provide cover, influence or persuasion, regardless of the legislator’s current position on the three FTAs. We do not want to miss contacting any member of Congress during this time.

Please provide updates on state Farm Bureau actions, including state fair actions, or feedback to Cody Lyon (codyl@fb.org).

Helpful Web Sites

The Free Trade Agreements page (<http://www.fbactinsider.org/issues/free-trade-agreements>) on the FBACT Insider Web site (<http://www.fbactinsider.org>) provides helpful information on the campaign. State Farm Bureaus are encouraged to share the Free Trade Agreements page of the FBACT Insider web site with your congressional delegation, membership, and others. Also, we encourage you to add a link on your state Farm Bureau web page or other appropriate web page.

SILO campaign Web page -- (<http://silofb.org>). Click “Advocacy” at the top of the page and then “Trade Matters” on the left side of the page.

AFBF FBACT (CapWiz) Legislative Action Center – (<http://capwiz.com/afb/home/>).

Background

AFBF launched the “Trade Matters” campaign to improve farmers’ and ranchers’ access and competitiveness with passage of the Korea, Colombia and Panama free trade agreements (FTAs). The three agreements combine for nearly \$2.5 billion in additional agricultural exports when fully executed and an increase in jobs. The delay in passing these agreements has already cost American farmers and ranchers hundreds of millions of dollars by way of lost market share. AFBF is leading the charge to garner support for the passage of the Korea, Colombia, and Panama free trade agreements utilizing the organization’s advocacy resources.