

Barack Obama

December 26, 2007

Iowa Fair Trade Campaign
3839 Merle Hay Rd #282
Des Moines, IA 50310

Dear Friends:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your call for a new trade agenda and to share my views with you. We can't stop globalization in its tracks, but what we can do is have a president who's looking out for American workers and farmers and our environment, and that's the kind of President I'll be.

Like you, I refuse to accept that we have to stand idly by while American workers lose their jobs, our communities struggle, and the American dream slips further out of reach. It's time to start putting working people ahead of special interests and Washington lobbyists. We need to make sure that the rules governing trade are fair and that we're investing in our workers so that they remain the most competitive in the world.

I have heard your call for reform and share your frustration with trade agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that are not working for American workers. While NAFTA gave broad rights to investors, it paid only lip service to the rights of labor and the importance of environmental protection. Ten years later, CAFTA had many of the same problems, which is why I voted against it. I supported the Peru Free Trade Agreement because it broke that model, put labor and environmental protections in the core of the agreement and stated explicitly that no foreign investor would have any greater rights in the U.S. than any American. This agreement signified progress in the trade debate that I will build on and continue to drive as president in favor of working people.

We can do more. I will work to expand our trade agenda beyond lowering tariffs and protecting our commercial interests. One of the first things I'll do as President will be to call the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of Mexico and work with them to fix NAFTA. We'll add binding obligations to protect the right to collective bargaining and other core labor standards recognized by the International Labor Organization. And I will add enforceable measures to NAFTA, the World Trade Organization (WTO), CAFTA and other Free Trade Agreements (FTA's) currently in effect. Similarly, we should add binding environmental standards so that companies from one country cannot gain an economic advantage by destroying the environment. And we should amend NAFTA to make clear that fair laws and regulations written to protect citizens in any of the three countries cannot be overridden simply at the request of foreign investors.



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In an Obama administration, we'll also have a U.S. Trade Representative who's actually representing American workers. And we'll do more to stop countries like China from acting unfairly when it comes to trade – because no country should get a free pass if they're bending the rules.

I have talked extensively about stepping up enforcement of our trade and product safety laws and I am committed to doing so. We will not allow the shipment of toys contaminated with lead into our country, nor will we place our people at risk of eating food that does not meet our safety standards. I will fight the manipulation of currency others are engaged in, including China, because it makes their products artificially cheaper than ours. And we will demand equal access to markets abroad for our producers so that the centralized discrimination against our auto producers in Korea through taxes and regulation is not repeated in other markets with other American goods and services.

As president, I will make sure that any goods coming into America meet American safety standards, and that the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Food and Drug Administration and the other agencies that protect consumers have the tools necessary to make sure that what we're buying is safe. I will protect our producers from dumping, predatory pricing, and currency manipulation. And I will promote policies to reinvigorate our manufacturing sector by ending tax breaks for companies that ship jobs overseas.

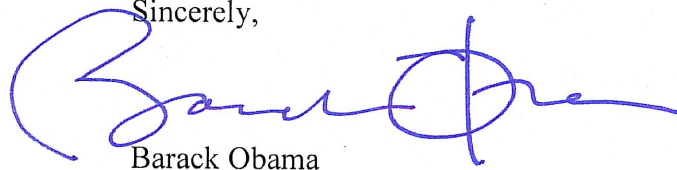
With regards to provisions in several FTA's that give foreign investors the right to sue governments directly in foreign tribunals, I will ensure that this right is strictly limited and will fully exempt any law or regulation written to protect public safety or promote the public interest. Our judicial system is strong and gives everyone conducting business in the United States recourse in our courts. The tribunal system was created to ensure that our investors would have access to similar protection abroad. I understand the concerns surrounding this issue, and am committed to working to address them.

But globalization is about more than trade agreements. It includes the rise of China and India and a rapidly changing technology, advanced manufacturing, and a services based economy. And as we work to change the rules of the global economy to help working people, I will undo the neglect by our own government of the needs and rights of working people at home. Just as we insist on the right to organize abroad, we must protect those rights here in the United States at our ports and in the sectors where trade has created jobs. We know that organized workers are better able to collectively bargain for their fair share of the wealth our economy creates.

I'll pass the Employee Free Choice Act – because if a majority of workers in an organization want a union, they should get a union. And I'll make sure we have a Labor Department that is actually committed to defending the rights of labor. In addition, I will add safeguards to our prevailing wage policies, and defend the worker protections under the Davis-Bacon Act. We do not use these policies as protectionist tools and I will work to ensure that other countries do not exercise protectionist tools either. I will replace Fast Track with a process that includes criteria determining appropriate negotiating partners that includes an analysis of labor and environmental standards as well as the state of civil society in those countries. Finally, I will ensure that Congress plays a strong and informed role in our international economic policy and in any future agreements we pursue and in our efforts to amend existing agreements.

Expanding global markets can be a good thing – but only when we sign trade deals that put American workers first and when Washington recognizes that increased trade alone is insufficient to create broad based growth at home or abroad. We need change and that's what I'll deliver as president.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Barack Obama", with a large, stylized initial "B" and a circular flourish at the end.

Barack Obama