

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

Oppose the Free Trade Agreements with Korea, Colombia and Panama

The Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus is asking all members to vote no on the three Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with South Korea, Colombia and Panama.

With the African American unemployment rate over 16 percent, Latino unemployment over 11 percent and youth unemployment over 45 percent, we simply cannot afford more job loss from bad trade agreements. Even before our current jobs crisis began, the United States had lost over 5 million manufacturing jobs since implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Twenty-five percent of the manufacturing jobs that existed in this country before NAFTA and WTO were lost. As more than 40,000 manufacturing facilities were shuttered, hundreds of thousands of workers pathways to the Middle Class were shattered.

And, now in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, as the CBC's Jobs Initiative multicity tour this summer spotlighted, our communities are suffering depression-level economic hardship. There could be no worse time for these three pending trade agreements which threaten our communities with yet more job loss.

- ◆ The **Korea** FTA is the biggest trade deal since NAFTA. Even the official government studies of this deal let us know up front that it will increase our trade deficit. Seven major manufacturing sectors would be hit hardest with losses from autos to those green jobs of the future in high speed trains, solar and computers. And, the deal's extremely low domestic content rules open a back door for more Chinese imports. This agreement would displace an estimated 159,000 net U.S. jobs, mostly in manufacturing.
- ◆ How could we even consider a trade deal with **Colombia**, the most dangerous place in the world for trade unionists? Since President Bush signed this deal in 2007, violence against and forced displacements of Afro-Colombians has intensified. And, the number of unionists killed annually has jumped from 37 in 2007 to 51 in 2010 - more than in the rest of the world combined. So far in 2011, another 23 have been killed, despite Colombia's heralded "Labor Action Plan."
- ◆ **Panama**, with a history of failing to protect workers' rights, is known as a tax haven for money launderers and tax dodgers. There is no prospective economic gain from this deal, given the tiny size of the country's economy. But the trade pact would make it harder for us to collect desperately needed revenue from the U.S. tax dodgers that are among the 300,000 offshore corporations sheltered in Panama.

Please join me in opposing all three of these NAFTA-style trade deals with South Korea, Colombia and Panama. - Rep. Emanuel Cleaver