

The President's Radio Address *October 13, 2007*

Good morning. This is an historic time for our Nation's economy. Last week, we learned that September was America's 49th consecutive month of job creation—the longest uninterrupted period of job growth on record. And on Thursday, we learned that the American economy set a new record for exports in a single month. Millions of American jobs depend on exports. More exports support better and higher paying jobs, and to keep our economy expanding, we need to keep expanding trade.

This week, I traveled to Miami to discuss the importance of trade and to call on Congress to pass new free trade agreements. In January of 2001, America had trade agreements in force with three countries. Now we have agreements in force with 14 countries, including 7 in Latin America. And Congress now has an opportunity to increase America's access to markets in our hemisphere by passing three more free trade agreements in Latin America with Peru, Colombia, and Panama.

These three agreements will expand America's access to 75 million customers. These 75 million customers are the equivalent of the populations of California, Colorado, Ohio, Michigan, Tennessee, and Massachusetts combined.

The first of the new Latin American trade agreements that my administration negotiated is with Peru. This agreement would level the playing field for American businesses and workers and farmers. While almost all Peruvian exports to the United States now enter duty-free, most American exports to Peru face significant tariffs. The free trade agreement would immediately eliminate most of Peru's industrial tariffs, as well as many of its barriers to U.S. agriculture exports, and make American products more affordable and more competitive in that country.

The second of the new Latin American trade agreements that my administration negotiated is with Colombia. Colombia is now our fifth largest trading partner in Latin America and the largest market for U.S. agricultural exports in South America. The free trade agreement with Colombia would immediately eliminate tariffs on more than 80 percent of American industrial and consumer exports. It would provide significant new duty-free access for American crops, and for the first time in history, U.S. companies would be able to compete on a level playing field.

The third of the new Latin American trade agreements that my administration negotiated is with Panama. This agreement will immediately eliminate tariffs on 88 percent of our industrial and consumer goods exports to Panama. It will increase access for American farmers and ranchers, and it will open opportunities for American businesses to participate in the multibillion dollar project to expand the Panama Canal.

As we work to pass these trade agreements with nations in Latin America, we'll also work to pass a landmark free trade agreement with an ally in the Far East, South Korea. This agreement would open up one of the world's most powerful economies to more American goods and services exports. This agreement is projected to add more than \$10 billion to America's economy. And like our agreements in Latin America, this agreement would strengthen our relationship with a democratic partner in a critical part of the world.

I know many Americans feel uneasy about new competition and worry that trade will cost jobs. So the Federal Government is providing substantial funding for trade adjustment assistance that helps Americans make the transition from one job to the next. We are working to improve Federal job training programs, and we are

providing strong support for America's community colleges, where people of any age can go to learn new skills for a better, high-paying career.

Expanding trade will help our economy grow. By passing these trade agreements, we will also serve America's security and moral interests. We will strengthen our ties with our friends. We will help counter the false populism promoted by hostile nations. And we will help young democracies show their people that freedom, openness, and the rule of law are the surest path to a better life. So I call on Congress to act

quickly and get these agreements to my desk.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on October 12 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on October 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 12, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at Stribling Packaging, Inc., in Rogers, Arkansas October 15, 2007

The President. One of the reasons I've stopped by this facility here in Arkansas is to remind people that small business is the backbone of our economy. These good folks are making a living; more importantly, they're providing labor for people here in this facility. And that's what we want. We want people working in America. We've gone through now 49 consecutive months of uninterrupted job growth; that's a record for the United States.

And one of the reasons why is our small-business owners are working hard. And another reason why is we've got people in the United States Congress who understand the role of government, and that is not to get in the way of business, but it's to create an environment where businesses flourish. And when people are buying this

man's boxes, it also means they're buying product at the retail level.

And so I want to thank you for giving me a chance to come by.

Bill Stribling. Absolutely.

The President. And appreciate the opportunity to meet your workers. As I was walking around, I was shaking the workers' hands. He said, "That's good that you're meeting them. After all, they're the reason this business is growing." And I appreciate a man who understands that. Thanks for your hospitality.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Bill Stribling, president, Stribling Packaging, Inc.