

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 21, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama  
The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

Dear President Obama:

We write about the importance of developing a strategy to expand U.S. exports. We understand that the Administration is working on a strategy and would urge both haste and focus.

As was highlighted at the White House Jobs and Economic Growth Forum held in December, expanding U.S. exports can be a critical factor to economic recovery, and to creating jobs. In fact, the U.S. Department of Labor's Chief Economist said in a December 9 hearing before a Senate panel that expansion of exports has the potential to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs that, on average, provide better wages and benefits than jobs not associated with exporting. Similarly, as the Director of the National Economic Council recently highlighted, our ability to export is going to be central to generating employment and helping the U.S. recover its sound economic footing.

There is a lot of room to expand exports' contribution to the U.S. economy. Only four percent of American firms are exporting, and just 500 of mainly large companies account for 60 percent of U.S. exports. Furthermore, exports' contribution to the American economy is about half of what their contribution is to other advanced countries. These figures begin to demonstrate why it is essential to reduce foreign trade barriers to American goods and services and enable more U.S. companies to benefit from export opportunities.

We commend your recent attention to exports, and seek to work with you to develop a strategy that goes beyond pursuing export opportunities in general but rather establishes a specific focus, goals, and mechanisms for coordination. Increasing exports is a short-term imperative to create jobs and help our economy recover, but we must also revamp our approach to ensure that export promotion plays a productive role in economic growth over time.

Establishing an export expansion strategy, in our view, first requires setting specific short- and long-term goals related to the trade deficit and to increasing the number of businesses and workers who can benefit from untapped foreign demand for U.S.-produced goods and services. For example, we ask you what it would take for America to double the number of firms exporting and reduce by half our trade deficit by 2015, as this would be a worthy goal. We believe that any successful export-oriented initiative must be implemented through a range of initiatives across the federal government, and would benefit from close partnership with local governments and the private sector. A bipartisan partnership to expand exports is also critical and we are willing to work with you to develop such a strategy.

Congress' desire for the implementation of a government-wide export promotion strategy is not new. The Export Enhancement Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-429) established the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee (TPCC) and tasked it with developing and implementing an export promotion strategy across all the appropriate government agencies. We ask for an update on where this process and structure stands and if you need further legislation or direction to make it more effective.

Expanding U.S. exports is one way to help re-ignite the engines of the American economy, and we look forward to working with you and to expeditious action.

Sincerely,

Ron Wyden

Mimi Castner

Mike Crayon

Bill Nelson

Robert Menendez

Tom Carper

Jim Bennison

Chuck Sch

Amy Klobuchar

Mike Enzi

John F. Kerry

Olympic Amory

Pat Roberts

Debbie Stabenow