

Pelosi Statement in Support of Peru Free Trade Agreement

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WASHINGTON - Speaker Nancy Pelosi spoke on the floor tonight supporting H.R. 3688, the United States-Peru Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act, which the House will vote on tomorrow morning.

Below are her remarks for release:

"Mr. Speaker, I know that this is a difficult issue for Members to decide upon because it goes right to the heart of family life in America. It's about the job security, the economic security, the health security of America's families. And the issue of trade has been one that has been controversial, and frankly, I have largely been on the other side of it than I am tonight.

"I rise in support of the Peru Trade Agreement, and I want to tell my colleagues why. They will have to make up their own minds.

"When I saw an opportunity for us to have labor and environmental standards as a core part of our trade agreements, it marked a drastic difference from what even a Democratic President was willing to give on that score, even a Democratic President. We couldn't get that in the Clinton Administration.

"So here we are today trying to make some distinctions, trying to make some distinctions about trade agreements, that some are better than others. I don't think any of them are perfect on either end.

"I certainly believe that part of the legacy of our great party is the legacy of President John F. Kennedy, who said that free trade was a part of who we are as a country and that international trade would be good for our economy. But we want not only free trade, we want fair trade.

"We are going to be Uncle Sam instead of 'Uncle Sap' in these trade relationships. It has to be fair. It has to be right for our workers.

"We recognize the fear and apprehension and uncertainty that exists in many families and homes across America because of their jobs going overseas, with businesses closing, communities having a downturn, and people who can't sell their homes, all the consequences that go with that. The Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee put forth legislation that passed the House last week, which I hope the President of the United States will sign.

"I think it's essential if we're going to accomplish anything on trade, on immigration, on anything else, that people know that we share the concerns that they have and that we're doing something about it. So the trade adjustment assistance bill, in terms of providing job training and opportunity and health care, is very important.

"We certainly have to be concerned about the impact of trade. It's self-evident and it is a challenge for us. But we cannot turn our backs on it. And I absolutely refuse to have the Democratic Party be viewed, and I say this to my Republican colleagues, I don't want this party to be viewed as an anti-trade party.

"So let's make some distinctions. Take every trade agreement on its own merit. The Peru Free Trade Agreement rises to the level of acceptance. I am not saying it is perfect. It rises to the level of acceptance. Labor and environmental principles are in the core of the bill. Other changes we wanted to see were made by the Congress in Peru. They made the changes that they said we needed to have.

"So if you're ever going to support any trade agreement, I would think this would be the easiest one to do. Other trade agreements have other obstacles that have to be dealt with.

"It is frustrating, and I respect everything that has been said by my colleagues in this debate. I think it is all legitimate. Some, like Marcy Kaptur, have been in this fight for a long time. Families of America have no greater champion advocating for the best possible outcome for them.

"But again, viewing in the context of we want an economy that is fairer, that we have a progressive economic agenda where many more people participate in the economic success of our country. That's why we raised the minimum wage, made college more affordable, etc. And that's why we're promoting our Innovation Agenda for energy security and reversing global warming so that we can create many more jobs, so America's farmers can fuel America's energy independence, we'll send our energy dollars to the Midwest and not to the Middle East.

"This is a bigger picture than the Peru Free Trade Agreement. The Peru Free Trade Agreement is not a big deal in terms of trade agreements. But it's an important step in saying we can make distinctions about trade relationships. They're grossly unfair to the American worker, greatly oppressive to the workers in their own countries, and are not making people freer. And to those that are in furtherance of growing our own economy while helping to lift other economies in the world, I think in this case the Peru Free Trade Agreement goes in that direction.

"So that is why, my colleagues, I'm supporting this. It may seem to be a departure to some of you to where I've been on other trade agreements, but it is a marked difference from where we were before, whether it was President Bush One, whether it was President Clinton, and where we are now.

"Those many who have been on one side or the other of this all say it's an amazing accomplishment to have gotten that done. And for that, whatever the outcome of this vote is, I once again want to pay tribute to Chairman Rangel and Chairman Levin, chairman of the subcommittee, for the great leadership of the work they did. I just wanted you to know why I was supporting this bill."