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Robert Cash

Texas Fair Trade Coalition

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4329

May 19, 2009

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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DEMOCRATIC AT-LARGE WHIP

Dear Mr. Cash:

The Administration has signaled its intent to move forward on the Panama Free Trade Agreement (FTA) despite strong concerns many members of Congress have with the current provisions. I cannot support the Panama Free Trade Agreement in its current form, and I would urge the Administration to renegotiate the treaty rather than submitting the Bush Administration agreement to Congress under fast-track authority. Proponents may argue that the agreement is small, and will win the U.S. good favor in Central America, but when the unemployment rate in the U.S. is over 8% we cannot afford to lose one more job from moving forward on a free trade agreement that does not require labor and safety standards on par with what we have here in our country.

Additionally, it sets bad precedent that we will pass a free trade agreement with a country that's laws make it extremely difficult for workers to organize and collectively bargain for better wages and working conditions, does not enforce environmental standards, and is know as a major tax-haven with no transparency in its financial system. I believe a renegotiated agreement addressing these issues could win broad approval and benefit both countries, but moving forward with the current agreement does nothing to protect American workers or improve the working conditions in Panama.

Again, I thank you and the Texas Fair Trade Coalition for your work to promote fair trade, not just free trade. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance on this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

Gene Green
Member of Congress

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