

# **U.S. gov't launches fall campaign to pass FTAs with S. Korea, three other nations**

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WASHINGTON -- The United States launched an interagency website Monday to campaign for public and congressional support for its pending free trade agreements (FTAs) with South Korea and three other nations.

In a trade rally on Capitol Hill, Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) was joined by Cabinet members to mark an effort to pass the FTAs this fall.

"The more Americans know about how existing free trade agreements have created economic opportunities and expanded consumer choices, the more they will support free trade agreements we have concluded with Peru, Colombia, Panama and Korea, which are now pending before Congress," U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Susan Schwab said.

"The facts available at this website make a compelling and definitive case for trade," she said.

Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez cited numbers -- record exports of US\$1.4 trillion in 2006 and an 11 percent increase in exports up to June this year.

"The story of America's growing export culture needs to be told," he said, and the interagency effort is to show how Washington's trade policy "contributes to our nation's economy."

Having come back from summer recess, the Democrat-controlled Congress is expected to deliberate on the four FTAs awaiting ratification. The Peru FTA could go to a House vote in October.

The South Korea FTA, inked in June and the last of the four to be signed, is considered to be at the trailing end in the order of ratification, but officials cautiously have been saying that they hope to move it up.

The South Korean government submitted the FTA to its National Assembly last week.

The new U.S. website, TradeAgreements.gov, is jointly run by the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, State, Treasury and the USTR.