



Office of
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ONE VOICE

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ONE AGENDA

7234 Parkway Drive
Hanover, MD
21076

Organizing Since 1887



INTERNATIONAL UNION OF PAINTERS AND ALLIED TRADES, AFL-CIO

June 30, 2011

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 140,000 active and retired members of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT), I am writing you regarding the proposed Free Trade Agreement between the United States and the Republic of Korea (KORUS FTA). I have serious concerns about duty free construction materials entering the United States and the devastating effect that this and all free trade agreements have on the manufacturing sector.

The IUPAT represents men and women working in the finishing trades as commercial and industrial painters, drywall finishers, wall coverers, glaziers, glass workers, floor covering installers, sign makers, display workers, convention and show decorators, and many more occupations. Our union is made up of over 400 local union halls throughout the United States. While the IUPAT is working overtime to make sure our membership has the ability to provide for their families through this time of chronic and crippling unemployment, I find it unimaginable that this job killing trade agreement would even be considered. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 13,700,000 Americans remain unemployed and nearly 2.5 million Americans have given up on finding work because job loss is so rampant in their communities. The United State International Trade Commission (ITC) report from March 2010 projects that implementation of the Korea Free Trade Agreement would increase the U.S. goods trade deficit. This predicted increase in the U.S. trade deficit under the Korean FTA would risk the jobs of millions of Americans, including IUPAT members, employed in our industries.

Even the White House has ceded the point that this Free Trade Agreement will cost jobs when they demanded on May 16, 2011, that Trade Adjustment Assistance be a prerequisite to the ratification of any of the three pending Free Trade Agreements. While the IUPAT is supportive of the president's promise to provide burial insurance to thousands upon thousands of Americans who will lose their jobs due to the Korean Free Trade Agreement. A better policy would be to focus on rebuilding the frail U.S. economy by investing in American workers instead of workers from North Korea, Korea, China or any other country that imports component parts through Korean ports.

Approximately 20% of IUPAT members work in the manufacturing sector. They work to maintain factories and manufacture paint, plate glass, and floor covering materials, and fabricating glass systems. According to the ITC, these members' jobs and their livelihood would be directly threatened by the duty free importation of the products they proudly manufacture or fabricate as American made.

IUPAT members working in glass fabrication shops manufacture energy efficient shells for buildings and factories. Their product would be turned away in favor of duty free glass panels shipped from Korea. The ITC report indicates that IUPAT members who manufacture floor covering materials or wall coverings would be told to find a new career when cheap carpets, rugs, and wall covering materials flood the United States duty free. It is clear that duty free will destroy American communities and leave Americans families helpless.

Beyond the very troubling job loss predicted by the USITC, I am deeply concerned about the weak rule of origin that was negotiated by President George W. Bush in this Free Trade Agreement. In 2009, millions of pounds of toxic drywall entered the United States. That lack of oversight put thousands of IUPAT members and an estimated 60,000 families at risk. This was the direct result of allowing uninspected products from an under-regulated country. The weak rule of origin opens the United States, the members of the IUPAT, and American property owners up to the strong possibility that subpar and possibly dangerous building materials will enter the United States and be used in our homes and businesses.

In the interest of the United States economy and all of the families who wish to be working again, including the membership of the IUPAT, I strongly urge you to stand up for American made products and jobs by voting against the Republic of Korea/United States Free Trade Agreement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James A. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James A. Williams
General President

cc: EGVP Rigmaiden
EAGP Stricker

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