



2009 Statement of Trade Policy Positions

Support for Trade Agreements: PNITA supports passage of the three completed trade agreements that require congressional approval: Colombia, South Korea, and Panama. Market access provisions in these agreements will provide an important advantage in countries that represent an economic opportunity for Northwest companies that currently pay double-digit tariffs on goods that are duty free for their European or Latin American competitors. The agreements will bind these countries to enforcing new intellectual property standards and provide the US with a dispute mechanism to win compliance. Finally, the agreements require our trading partners to enforce – and, in some cases, improve – their labor and environmental laws to guarantee they are not being ignored to enhance competitiveness. This, too, would be subject to enforcement under dispute resolution to ensure compliance.

In addition to bi-lateral agreements, PNITA supports the on-going negotiation as part of the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization. Elimination of tariffs on industrial and agricultural goods, as well as services, is an important part of our effort to make Northwest companies price competitive in foreign markets.

PNITA also supports extension of Trade Promotion Authority, which provides the President with the ability to negotiate trade agreements. While TPA expired last year, we recognize that it is unlikely to be extended this Congress. Nevertheless, we have historically supported this authority and look forward to working with members of the Northwest Congressional Delegation to extend it in the future.

Trade Adjustment Assistance: PNITA supports modernization of trade adjustment assistance (TAA) programs, which benefit workers who lose their job as a direct result of imports. International trade has been a positive for Northwest workers, but localized harm can result when individual companies suffer or must close due to sudden shifts in trade, a loss of competitiveness or market share, or obsolescence. TAA was established to provide useful worker training, but its programs can be inaccessible and cumbersome for impacted workers to access. PNITA supports the addition of service workers to TAA eligibility. PNITA urges adequate funding to provide training for tomorrow's jobs. PNITA believes that a strong, vibrant and effective TAA program completes the compact with workers that is essential to public support for expanding international trade.

Trade Remedy Laws: Currently, various U.S. trade laws permit U.S. companies to obtain relief in the form of temporary or conditional import restrictions when those companies are injured by imports. Such injury might result from "unfair" practices such as dumping, subsidization, or intellectual property theft. In much rarer cases, the imports might simply be "injurious" to U.S. companies but not necessarily "unfair." Discussions are beginning in Congress that may lead to even tougher trade remedy laws, which would strengthen further the ability to restrict imports. PNITA believes that current law has proven to be effective for those seeking relief so we are less likely to join in the push for greater restrictions. We urge Congress to approach this debate cautiously.

China: Pacific Northwest companies rely on a healthy and vibrant trading relationship with China, which is now Oregon's second-largest export market. One of the fundamental underpinnings of a healthy relationship is an adherence to the rules with which we have jointly agreed. We urge a vigorous, coordinated and focused effort to hold China accountable to the commitments it made as a condition of joining the WTO. This includes protecting intellectual property, investment, and transparency of government procedures.

While it is important that the U.S. insist upon Chinese compliance with these rules, we caution against broad, sweeping initiatives that disrupt our complex trading relationship. Such is the case with the revaluation of the yuan. PNITA supports strong, bilateral efforts to reform China currency policy, but U.S. lawmakers should resist the temptation to legislate a so-called quick solution. West Coast companies and ports will bear the brunt of any unintended consequences of such legislation.

Visas and Export Controls: The inter-connectedness of the global economy and the speed of technology innovation can foster a growing tension between the needs of U.S. businesses and prudent national security measures. This tension has led to limitations and excessive delays in accessing export licenses for new technology and visas for individuals with highly-specialized skills. PNITA believes that U.S. policy should give significant weight to U.S. companies seeking to enhance domestic research and development by attracting researchers and engineers from around the world. The procedures for approving work visas and export licenses should be expeditious and transparent. Measures to ensure national security need not create unnecessary impediments to U.S.-based R&D and manufacturing.

Export Assistance Programs: In order to ensure a healthy balance of trade with the rest of the world, it is important that U.S. companies continue to find new business opportunities abroad. The U.S. Department of Commerce's U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service helps Northwest businesses learn about new markets and fosters business relationships by connecting our entrepreneurs with manufacturers, distributors, and retailers around the globe. Programs such as the Foreign Agricultural Service, the SBA U.S. Export Assistance Centers, the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, and the Export / Import Bank are vital in helping businesses and farmers export goods and services abroad. So that these services continue to exist, PNITA supports adequate funding for these programs.