



U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Coalition



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U.S. House of Representatives Passes Bahrain FTA *U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Coalition Commends Bipartisan Effort*

Washington DC – The U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Coalition called on Senators to follow the example set by their colleagues in the House and take quick action to approve the U.S.-Bahrain FTA. Noting the overwhelming vote of approval for the free trade agreement, passed by a House vote of 327 to 95, Coalition leaders expressed their appreciation and hope that the agreement could go into effect as early as January 1st, 2006.

“A measure like this, which strengthens a strategic and longstanding relationship with an important U.S. ally and moves us closer to a cohesive economic policy in the Middle East, should never be partisan,” said Bill Reinsch, President of the National Foreign Trade Council. “The House vote shows that this is the case. Having the support of 115 Democrats sends a clear message – open trade is a win-win proposition,” Reinsch added.

Bahrain is a major non-NATO ally of the United States, is the headquarters for the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet, and has been a strong supporter in the global war on terrorism and the military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Under the terms of the agreement, all American consumer and industrial products will immediately become duty-free. Similarly, 98 percent of agricultural tariff lines will be immediately eliminated with the remaining 2 percent phased out over 10 years.

In addition to the Bahrain FTA, the United States Trade Representative has recently concluded an agreement with Oman and is currently negotiating an FTA with the United Arab Emirates. In the Middle East, free trade agreements exist between the U.S. and Israel, Jordan and Morocco.

“This agreement continues the U.S. momentum toward our goal of establishing a Middle East Free Trade Zone by 2013. Immediate Senate action and the prospect of opening the New Year with this agreement in place would energize the U.S. effort to offer the people of the Middle East the promise of improved economic conditions and true participation in the multilateral trading system,” said Peter Tichansky, President of the Business Council for International Understanding.

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The National Foreign Trade Council (www.nftc.org) is a leading business organization advocating an open, rules-based global trading system. Founded in 1914 by a broad-based group of American companies, the NFTC now serves hundreds of member companies through its offices in Washington and New York.

The Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU), a U.S. business association founded in 1955 at White House initiative, is dedicated to promoting dialogue and action between the business and government communities for the purpose of expanding international commerce.

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