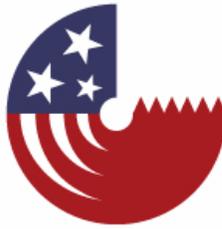


**U.S.-Bahrain
Free Trade Agreement
Coalition**



Co-Chairs

Lionel Johnson
Citigroup, Inc.

William Rice
Alcoa

Secretariat

**Business Council for
International
Understanding**
1133 15th Street, N.W.
Suite 900
Washington, D.C. 20005
Tel. 202-775-6074
www.bciiu.org

**National Foreign
Trade Council**
1625 K Street, N.W.,
Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20006
Tel. 202-887-0278
www.nftc.org

**National U.S.-Arab
Chamber of Commerce**
1023 15th Street, N.W.
4th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005
Tel. 202-289-5920
www.nusacc.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 3, 2004

Contact: Elizabeth-Ann Chandler
Fratelli Group for NFTC
202-822-9491

**U.S.-Bahrain FTA Coalition Lauds Formation of
Congressional Bahrain Caucus**

Washington, DC – The U.S.-Bahrain FTA Coalition today welcomed the formation of the U.S.-Bahrain Congressional Caucus as a key development in the FTA negotiation process. Led by Congressmen Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Jim Turner (D-TX), the Caucus applauds and strongly supports the strengthening of economic, commercial and diplomatic relations between the United States and Bahrain.

As Bahraini and U.S. officials this week begin their second round of negotiations on the FTA – with a goal of concluding the negotiations in 2004 – the work of the new Caucus is critical, coalition officials said.

“The U.S.-Bahrain Congressional Caucus will be a strong force in deepening and expanding ties between our two countries, and in fact the entire Middle East, especially during the completion of a U.S.-Bahrain FTA,” said William Rice of ALCOA and the U.S.-Bahrain FTA Coalition. Citing Bahrain’s longtime strong relationship with the United States on a range of issues, Rice pointed to the bipartisan makeup of the caucus as a clear indication of Congress’ commitment to the U.S.-Bahrain relationship.

At today’s Caucus announcement on Capitol Hill, lawmakers and business leaders heard from U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, along with Abdulla Hassan Saif, Bahrain’s Minister of Finance and National Economy, on this week’s continuing FTA negotiations and the formation of the U.S.-Bahrain Congressional Caucus.

On May 21, 2003, the U.S. and Bahraini governments officially announced negotiations on the U.S.-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The U.S.-Bahrain FTA Coalition, organized through a secretariat comprised of the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU), the National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC), and the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC), consists of more than 40

-More-

companies, associations and organizations that support the negotiation and approval by Congress of this agreement with our long standing ally in the Arabian Gulf, Bahrain.

Bahrain has been a steadfast ally to the United States historically, and recently on the war on terrorism, and has been designated by President Bush as a major non-NATO ally in October 2001. The U.S.-Bahrain FTA, and the broader Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) initiative, builds upon these long standing ties by ensuring closer economic and commercial relations, as well as a brighter economic future for those that share a desire for peace and greater prosperity.

“We will work side by side with the new Congressional caucus to advance the longstanding strong relations between Bahrain and the U.S.,” said Lionel C. Johnson of Citigroup, Inc. and the U.S.-Bahrain FTA Coalition. “By advocating a comprehensive FTA, our Coalition and the Congressional Caucus look to improve the climate for U.S. companies doing business in Bahrain by pursuing commitments in regulatory transparency, legal practices and dispute resolution. This agreement will be a landmark in building a more open and dynamic relationship between the U.S. and the entire Middle East region. This will be no small feat for American business and U.S. negotiators, and we are greatly encouraged by this strong demonstration of early congressional support for an FTA with Bahrain.”

The Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU), a U.S. business association founded in 1959 at White House initiative, is dedicated to promoting dialogue and action between the business and government communities for the purpose of expanding international commerce.

The National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC) 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 400 member companies through its offices in Washington and New York.

The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) is a leading business association dedicated to promoting, supporting and strengthening American and Arab commercial relations. For over 35 years NUSACC continues to represent the private sectors of the US and the Arab world through its network of affiliations with chambers of commerce and industry throughout the Middle East North Africa region and its offices in New York, Houston, Los Angeles and Washington, DC.

###