



What American Presidents Think About Trade

January 25, 2011

Since the Great Depression, all American Presidents—Democrat and Republican—have supported international trade negotiations to open markets as a means to promote American economic growth and to create new jobs.

“The action of the Congress in continuing the operation of the trade agreements program is expressive of the determination on the part of our people to retain unimpaired, for the next three years, this powerful instrument for promoting our national economic well-being and for strengthening the foundation of a stable peace.”

President Franklin D. Roosevelt on Signing the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Bill April 12, 1940

“World prosperity also requires we do all we can to expand world trade.”

President Harry S. Truman State of the Union Address January 4, 1950

“World trade supports a significant segment of American industry and agriculture. It provides employment for four and one-half million American workers....If we use [trade] wisely to meet the expanding demands of the world, we shall not only provide future opportunities for our own business, agriculture, and labor, but in the process strengthen our security posture and other prospects for a prosperous, harmonious world.”

President Dwight D. Eisenhower State of the Union Address January 9, 1958

“... [W]e cannot protect our economy by stagnating behind tariff walls...the best protection possible is a mutual lowering of tariff barriers among friendly nations so that all may benefit from the free flow of goods. Increased economic activity resulting from increased trade will provide more job opportunities for our workers. Our industry, our agriculture, our mining will benefit from increased export opportunities as other nations agree to lower their tariffs. Increased exports and imports will benefit our ports, steamship lines, and airlines as they handle an increased amount of trade. Lowering our tariffs will provide an increased flow of goods for our American consumers. Our industries will be stimulated by increased export opportunities and by freer competition with the industries of other nations for an even greater effort to develop an efficient, economic, and productive system. The results can bring a dynamic new era of growth.”

President John F. Kennedy Remarks Upon Signing the Trade Expansion Act October 11, 1962

“Our basic trade policy remains the same: We remain opposed as ever to protectionism, because America’s growth and future depend on trade. But we would insist on trade that is fair and free. We are always willing to be trade partners but never trade patsies.”

President Ronald Reagan State of the Union Address January 27, 1987

“Standing as we are on the edge of a new century, we know that economic growth depends as never before on opening new markets overseas and expanding the volume of world trade.”

President William J. Clinton State of the Union Address February 17, 1993

“Keeping America competitive requires us to open more markets for all that Americans make and grow...and we want people everywhere to buy American. With open markets and a level playing field, no one can out produce or outcompete the American worker.”

President George W. Bush State of the Union Address January 31, 2006

“We have to seek new markets aggressively, just as our competitors are. If American sits on the sidelines while other nations sign trade deals, we will lose the chance to create jobs on our shores.”

President Barack Obama State of the Union Address January 27, 2010

“Export growth leads to job growth...So at a time when jobs are in short supply, building exports is an imperative. But this isn’t just about where jobs are today; this is where American jobs will be tomorrow. Ninety-five percent of the world’s customers and fastest growing markets are beyond our borders. So if we want to find new growth streams, if we want to find new markets and new opportunity, we’ve got to compete for those new customers—because other nations are competing for those customers.”

President Barack Obama Announcing the President’s Export Council July 7, 2010

The Trade and American Competitiveness Coalition is made up of U.S. business enterprises that support policies and legislation that will enhance U.S. competitiveness in the international economy to promote growth and prosperity for America’s businesses, workers and consumers.