



U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Coalition



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U.S.-Bahrain FTA Coalition Testifies Before House Ways and Means Coalition Member, National Foreign Trade Council, Commends Committee for Quick Action and Urges a Timely Vote

Washington, D.C. – The U.S. Bahrain Free Trade Agreement Coalition today testified before the House Committee on Ways and Means on the importance of quickly approving and effectively implementing the Free Trade Agreement the U.S. has negotiated with the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Speaking on behalf of the Coalition, Lionel Johnson, Vice President and Director of International Government Affairs for Citigroup, emphasized both the importance of the FTA for Bahrain and for the larger Middle East Region. “Liberalized trade with the region offers the people of the Middle East the promise of improved economic conditions, true participation in the multilateral trading system, and an enhanced respect for transparency and the rule of law,” Johnson stated. He added, “This agreement presents us the opportunity to restore the constructive spirit of bipartisanship that has characterized US trade policy for decades.”

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% of U.S. agricultural tariff lines will be immediately eliminated with the remaining 2% phased out over 10 years.

Emphasizing the important role the U.S.-Bahrain FTA plays in achieving the larger U.S. objective of securing a free trade pact with the Middle East by 2013, Bill Reinsch, President of the National Foreign Trade Council, again called for quick Congressional approval. “The negotiations on this FTA were concluded more than a year ago and it was ratified by the Bahrainis this summer. Congressional approval is the final step. Given the critical role this FTA can play in advancing our economic development and trade integration goals in this region, there is no room for further delay.”

In addition to the Bahrain FTA, the United States Trade Representative is currently negotiating agreements with Oman and the United Arab Emirates. In the Middle East, Free Trade Agreements already exist between the United States and Israel, Jordan and Morocco.

The U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Coalition, managed jointly by the National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC) and the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU), is made up of over 110 U.S. companies and associations supporting trade expansion and economic development in the Middle East.

The National Foreign Trade Council is a leading business organization advocating an open, rules-based world economy. Founded in 1914 by a group of American companies that supported an open world trading system, 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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