

(June 13, 2007) Lipinski Calls for Fair Trade Deals that Protect American Workers

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Members of Congress, American and Korean Labor Leaders Express Opposition to Proposed Trade Agreement

[Washington, D.C.] Today, Congressman Dan Lipinski was joined by a bipartisan group of members of Congress along with labor leaders from the U.S. and South Korea in expressing strong opposition to the proposed U.S.-Korea Trade Agreement. The Bush Administration concluded negotiations on the Korean Trade Agreement on April 1, 2007. However, the agreement must still clear both Congress and the Korean legislature.

"I am especially glad to be joined today by Korean workers, showing that opposition to this trade agreement is not about U.S. protectionism nor is it anti-Korean, it is about protecting hardworking men and women," said Lipinski. "We are not opposed to trade. We are opposed to destroying jobs, cutting wages and benefits, harming the environment, and expanding trade deficits. Congress must finally stand up for American workers."

The United States has a huge trade deficit with Korea, totaling \$14 billion in 2006. Eighty percent of that trade deficit is attributed to Korea's closed automotive markets. While Korean automakers exported 700,000 cars to the U.S. in 2006, American carmakers sold only 4,000 cars in Korea. However, the proposed trade agreement makes no real effort to level the playing field in automotive trade between the two countries.

"Unfair trade agreements have already cost this country millions of quality jobs and placed undue hardships on hardworking Americans," said Lipinski. "NAFTA, which this proposed trade agreement is modeled after, led to the loss of 100,000 manufacturing jobs in Chicagoland alone. Our country and my district cannot afford to have the mistakes of NAFTA repeated in Korea."

In Korea, the announcement of the trade deal with the United States was met with mass protests and several hunger strikes. Korean workers fear this trade deal will lead to increased exploitation of workers in their country and a loss of labor rights.