

Governor Richardson's Statement on Fair Trade

The next President is going to be charged with rebuilding the economy and supporting American workers and corporations in this new era of globalization. As President, I will begin by creating new policies to ensure that America's workers thrive.

First, I will empower unions. Workers must be able to organize and collectively bargain to counter the power of global big business. However, in recent years, laws and regulations at both the state and federal level have weakened the ability of unions to defend the interest of workers. Many companies have used intimidation and the threat of layoffs or plant closures to undermine workers rights here in the U.S. We must revise the law to ensure that all Americans have the right to join unions and bargain collectively. Moreover, in recent years, U.S. employers have been allowed to hire permanent replacements for striking workers. This has undermined the right of American workers to strike. We must change the law to protect the right of workers to use strikes to change workplace conditions and pay.

We must also provide incentives for American companies and the American economy to continue to innovate. Therefore, we should extend Research and Development tax credits for business and bolster investment in basic scientific and medical research. Their ability to innovate will ensure that our children's future remains bright. Finally, we must ensure that all Americans have access to health insurance with cost-controls.

Second, we need to get beyond debates over "free trade versus protectionism," and instead roll up our sleeves and pursue better trade agreements: agreement which enhance rather than erode US jobs, and which are socially just, environmentally responsible and politically sustainable. We must pursue bilateral and multilateral trade agreements that increase both the number and quality of US jobs while improving social and environmental conditions abroad.

When trade agreements ignore social and environmental objectives and subject people to the mercy of unregulated market forces, they lead a "race to the bottom", as companies move production to countries with weak labor and environmental protections. Trade agreements should truly prioritize social and environmental objectives, they must raise living standards and expand opportunities for both Americans and foreign workers. We must insist that governments **aggressively monitor** workplaces, protect human rights, and prevent environmental dumping. And we must help our free trade partners create a demand for good governance by including provisions within every trade agreement that require public comment and public participation. I believe this strategy will make it easier for citizens in our free trade partner nations to monitor their governments and ensure that policymakers enforce the law.

Trade agreements, when properly conceived and implemented, **must require** developing nations to improve their labor, human rights and environmental practices. I will insist that trade agreements demand adherence to core ILO standards. Our trade agreements must forbid slave, forced and child labor, and must guarantee workers the right to organize and collectively bargain. Such trade agreements must be vigorously enforced

by WTO. With such a new approach to trade, we can simultaneously empower overseas workers, improve living standards, and protect American workers from job loss.

Third, to truly expand opportunities we need to focus on global trade talks. I will ensure that trade increases access to opportunities and resources for workers at home and abroad. I believe the U.S. should offer a grand bargain to the members of the WTO: First, all of the members of the WTO should agree to adhere to and enforce the core ILO standards and the Kyoto treaty. Second, the 151 members of the WTO should also agree to a “no-standards lowering clause.” Developing countries should agree to fully enforce the rule of law throughout their countries and not exclude workers in export processing zones.

No country should be allowed to compete in trade based on inadequate governance—a failure to enforce, labor, environmental, or health and safety laws. Countries that do not enforce national law and internationally binding obligations will be subject to dispute settlement under the WTO.

We should also use the US governments’ huge purchasing power to promote labor and other human rights in the same way that procurement policies today support energy efficiency. The U.S. government should buy goods and services from companies that adhere to internationally accepted standards for social and environmental progress.

Without enforceable labor and environmental standards and a stronger safety net, the American people will continue to turn against trade and the many benefits it brings. Too many past trade agreements have thrown the natural environment and workers in all countries to the mercy of unregulated market forces. Americans will support freer trade if it enhances, rather than undermines, their economic security. With better governance, both the US economy and other economies can grow in environmentally more sustainable ways, while protecting the jobs and living standards of US workers.

Thank you so much for your help,

Governor Bill Richardson