

Rep. Sánchez Fires Up Trade Crowd

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Linda Sánchez (D-CA), Member of the Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee, gave a rousing speech about the future of American Fair Trade Policy to the National Council of Textile Organizations at their annual meeting in Washington.

Sánchez, also a Co-Founder of the House Trade Working Group, said, **“In my district, I see the closed factories. I hear from my unemployed neighbors. And I know that you’re seeing it in your communities too. We must turn the American economy around.”**

Sánchez also called on Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner to take action on the Chinese currency problem, and the USTR to work to end illegal subsidies, and Customs and Border Protection to provide well-trained customs inspectors to enforce the rules of origin and other provisions in our trade agreements.

“Our basic premise is that a trade policy that doesn’t work for working families doesn’t work for America,” continued Sánchez. **“It’s not a question of trade promotion versus protectionism. The question is whether our trade policy promotes fair trade, which can benefit working families across the nation, or unfair trade, which benefits only the wealthiest few at the expense of the rest of us.”**

Sánchez stressed that efforts to clean up the trade pool must include strengthening alliances between U.S. manufacturers, labor, and environmental interests.

“When I hear that the U.S. must provide additional trade preferences to nations with abusive labor records, I think of the old Vietnam era argument: “we had to destroy the village in order to save it.”

“Here’s where I think we should go with preference reform.”

“We should add environmental standards.”

“We should strengthen labor standards.”

“We should make sure that when the USTR finds wrong doing, it has the flexibility and authority to suspend benefits for individual industries or even individual producers within industries to avoid punishing whole countries for the bad acts of a few.”

“Finally, we should ensure that we don’t use preference programs as a substitute for international development aid, including infrastructure development and investment in human capital so that our poorer neighbors can grow their own next generation of entrepreneurs.”

“I am working with my colleagues on Ways and Means to advance these proposals and am hopeful that some or all of them will be included in our preference reform package.”

“We need to demonstrate that trade policy is of interest to more than just stockholders in Fortune 500 corporations. It’s of interest to businesses small and large. To executives and middle managers. To workers and their families.”

“Together, we can accomplish more than we ever could in the old-style “pro-trade v. anti-trade” stand-off if we shed our stereotypes about the other side and work together to achieve common goals.”

“While our economy is growing again, and we’re no longer staring into an economic abyss, we must do more to ensure that the good news spreads to more sectors of the economy. We can’t let an increase in low-wage service jobs satisfy us.”