



NATIONAL CONFERENCE *of* STATE LEGISLATURES

The Forum for America's Ideas

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Senator
Georgia Senate
President, NCSL

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Executive Director

March 1, 2010

The Honorable Ron Kirk
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street
Washington, D.C. 20208

Dear Ambassador Kirk:

Thank you for your thoughtful and candid presentations to state legislators and legislative staff at the National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) Fall Forum this past December. I am additionally pleased with your willingness to meet with NCSL leadership and the officers of the NCSL Labor and Economic Development Committee to discuss concerns of state legislators regarding numerous trade issues.

During our conversations you mentioned the importance of promoting U.S. exports as a means of jobs creation and economic recovery. I was excited to hear about the new Small- and Medium-Sized Businesses export initiative within the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR). I applaud your efforts with the new initiative, as well as the coordination at the federal level, but want to remind you of the critical role that states play in export promotion.

Many state legislatures have legislative committees whose jurisdiction includes international relations or trade. A few states created legislative trade commissions, comprised of state legislators, members of the executive branch and private sector. During a recent meeting conducted by USTR, a study was released that described the major issues and hurdles facing small- and medium- sized businesses that do not export. The number one source of information these businesses have used or expect to use to learn more about export best practices was state and local governments. I urge you to work with states, and use these resources as you actively reach out to small- and medium- sized businesses, especially those who do not currently export.

As you already know, states rely on foreign trade and marketing programs to promote exports and state legislators play a crucial role in export promotion and export finance, especially with small- and medium-sized businesses. The majority of these businesses have a difficult time securing financing, especially during these tough economic times. To remedy this problem, a number of state legislatures have supported export finance programs. However, the total burden of export financing should not be placed on the states. Your new initiative should include adequate financing so state programs can supplement federal programs.

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I am encouraged by your efforts to develop a national export promotion initiative with greater communication and coordination at the federal level. However, in order for this initiative to be successful in strengthening U.S. exports, there must be increased coordination and cooperation with existing state programs.

Thank you again for speaking to our members at the NCSL Fall Forum. I appreciate your leadership on export promotion and hope that we will be able to continue our dialogue and exchange ideas as you develop your initiative. Please do not hesitate to contact Diana Hinton Noel (202-624-7779 or diana.hinton@ncsl.org) if you or your staff have any questions or need any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juan C. Zapata". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "Z".

Representative Juan C. Zapata, Florida
Chair, NCSL Labor and Economic Development Committee

Enclosure: NCSL Export Promotion Policy