

Altmire Statement on Peru Free Trade Agreement

(Washington, DC) - U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-4) released the following statement regarding his vote today against the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement Implementation Act (H.R. 3688). The measure passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 285 to 132.

"Today I voted against the Peru Free Trade Agreement. Although I am encouraged that this agreement includes stronger labor and environment standards and is much improved over previous free trade agreements, most notably CAFTA and NAFTA, I believe that it still contains many troubling provisions."

"Chief among my concerns are the agreement's weak food safety provisions, which in some cases would require the United States to accept imported food that has not met our nation's safety standards. At a time of widespread recalls of tainted food imports, these provisions are simply unacceptable. I am also concerned about the agreement's procurement provisions, which leave federal and state procurement policies open to challenge, and keep in place the NAFTA-CAFTA ban on anti-offshoring and "Buy American" policies. Other provisions of the agreement would create a "race to the bottom" for commodity prices, which could further weaken the hand of small American farmers struggling to survive."

"In addition to these concerns, I lack the confidence that this Administration will actually implement the improved provisions included in the agreement. The stronger labor and environmental standards mean nothing if they are not strictly enforced. A failure to enforce particular provisions has been a problem in previous trade agreements, and nothing in the language of the Peru FTA guarantees that the new provisions will be given effect."

"Pennsylvania has been especially hard hit as a result of the flawed trade policies of the past, having lost 200,000 manufacturing jobs since the turn of the decade. While not all of these job losses can be blamed on trade policy, it is safe to say that our region has not been among the winners in previous trade agreements. In evaluating the Peru FTA, I decided that the risk of passing an improved but still flawed agreement, especially given our region's history with previous trade agreements, was simply too much to ignore. While I am open to the possibility of supporting future trade agreements, I will only be able to do so when I have full confidence that the agreements - and the Administration enforcing those agreements - start by putting American workers first and benefit western Pennsylvania's economy and families."