

International trade continues to be controversial for our country. In general, I believe trade liberalization contributes to overall economic growth for the United States and our trading partners, but we must have the right kind of trade agreements that do not put our country at a disadvantage because of our high labor, environmental, and safety standards. Our region is highly dependent on exports for growth, while many other areas of our state are extremely vulnerable to imports of manufactured goods. We need a trade policy that opens overseas markets while maintaining rules of fair competition.

I weigh each trade agreement that comes before the House carefully, based on how I think it will affect the Fourth District, North Carolina and the country. In addition to promoting export growth, good trade agreements must push our trading partners to raise their labor and environmental standards so that we are not penalized for the high standards we already maintain. I voted against the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), in large part because the President failed to take the necessary steps through CAFTA to move Central American countries forward in the areas of environmental and labor law enforcement.

Some workers in the United States will continue to experience dislocations as a result of trade competition, whether new trade agreements are adopted or not. Although the current Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program provides some short-term financial help and job training for workers and communities who are negatively affected by competition with imports, we will likely need to strengthen this program in the future. And we must stop giving companies tax breaks that encourage them to [export jobs overseas](#) .

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