

Written Statement by Ambassador Franklin L. Lavin
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International Trade Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
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Mr. Chairman, Senator Sarbanes, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear here today.

I want to thank Senator DeWine for his gracious introduction. I admire his service, and I am proud that he represents my home state.

I would also like to recognize my fellow Commerce nominees here on the panel, and if confirmed, I look forward to working with David McCormick, Israel Hernandez, and Darryl Jackson.

Mr. Chairman, it has been a privilege to serve the President and the American people as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Singapore. I am honored that President Bush and Secretary Gutierrez have asked me to serve as Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade.

If confirmed, I will be guided by three principles. First, U.S. companies can compete internationally. I firmly believe that there are tremendous export opportunities for U.S. companies, large and small. We produce world-class goods and services, and we can win in the global marketplace. The second principle is that we must use all of the tools at our disposal to ensure that American businesses face fair competition. We must enforce the rules. And we must hold our trading partners accountable to the agreements they have signed. Third, cooperation between the legislative branch and ITA is essential for a constructive international trade policy. I look forward to working with the Senate on the vital issues we face. Let me elaborate on these principles.

U.S. businesses are capable of competing and winning in the global market. Americans are resourceful, innovative, and quite nimble at adapting to change. We are living in an era of economic transition, but I have no doubt that American companies can successfully grapple with this challenge. Advances in technology allow even the smallest U.S. firms the opportunity to do business outside our borders.

I have spent a number of years in the public and private sectors helping U.S. companies navigate the international marketplace. I firmly believe that there are tremendous export opportunities for all U.S. companies, large and small. We must use all of the tools at our disposal to ensure that American businesses face fair competition. We must enforce the rules. And we must hold our trading partners accountable to the agreements they have signed.

Government must be a cooperating partner, opening markets and enforcing the rules that govern free trade. The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative negotiates trade agreements on behalf of all Americans. ITA then oversees compliance with, and enforcement of, all trade agreements. ITA is involved in every step of the implementation process.

The Senate is uniquely positioned to know first-hand about trade problems encountered by constituent companies. You have my commitment that ITA will work closely with Congress and remain attuned to any concerns about ITA-related matters. If confirmed, I will maintain an on-going dialogue with the Senate about trade and attendant commercial issues.

As an example of these principles, I would like to cite the Singapore FTA. It committed Singapore to maximum liberalization for bilateral trade in goods and services. It included state-of-the-art commitments in e-commerce, customs cooperation, transparency, and the protection of intellectual property rights, and it incorporated a constructive model for workforce and environmental matters. Since this FTA went into effect in 2004, U.S. exports have grown at a run-rate of almost 30 percent.

In closing, I would like to express my enthusiasm about ITA's critical mission. The men and women of ITA are professional and dedicated. The mission of ITA is to create economic opportunity for American workers and businesses by promoting international trade, opening foreign markets, ensuring compliance with trade laws and agreements, and supporting U.S. commercial interests at home and abroad. The men and women of ITA work around the world to support that mission. I firmly believe that their work has never been more critical to both our economic well-being and our national security. If confirmed, I would be honored to lead them in this endeavor.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Committee may have.