



July 11, 2006

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker
US House of Representatives

The Honorable Bill Frist
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
US House of Representatives

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate

We strongly support the President's proposal to grant Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) status to Vietnam. America's long-term security and economic interests will be advanced by Vietnam's full integration into the rules-based global trading system. Vietnam can become a catalyst for growth and development in Southeast Asia, and will offer significant opportunities for US companies, workers, and consumers.

In the thirty years since the end of the conflict in Southeast Asia, the United States has worked steadfastly to normalize relations with its former adversary. This effort proceeded, step by step, as we sought the fullest possible accounting of American prisoners of war and personnel missing in action. The "Roadmap" to normalization helped to achieve significant progress in this regard. We enjoy today a multifaceted, mutually beneficial relationship with Vietnam that has enabled us to engage on a range of issues, including protection of religious freedom, labor, and human rights.

Vietnam is home to nearly eighty-five million people, more than half of whom are under the age of twenty-five. As a country facing a host of infrastructure and human development challenges, Vietnam merits not only our attention, but also our support for the promising reform process that is underway. In this vein, the 2001 US-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement was an important milestone, and it has contributed to the development of a more open, market-oriented economy with important potential benefits for the Vietnamese and American peoples.

PNTR and WTO accession for Vietnam will strengthen America's linkages with the commercially and strategically important region of Southeast Asia, which, with a GDP of nearly \$3 trillion, represents our fourth largest export market. The comprehensive WTO accession agreement reached by Vietnam and US negotiators will provide even broader market access across a range of US goods and services. Equally important, it will enhance transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.

The granting of PNTR for Vietnam represents the logical next step in the normalization of relations between our two countries, a process that has been made more effective by broad bipartisan support in Congress, and that has spanned successive presidential administrations during the past three decades. We support the granting of PNTR in advance of Vietnam hosting the Annual APEC Leaders Meeting in November, in which President Bush will participate. This will further encourage Vietnam's emergence as a responsible regional partner, as we together address a myriad of complex international economic and security issues.

US-Vietnam WTO Coalition

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We urge the Congress to approve PNTR for Vietnam at the earliest possible opportunity this summer.

Sincerely,

Madeleine K. Albright
James A. Baker III
Charlene Barshefsky
Samuel L. Berger
William E. Brock III
Harold Brown
Warren Christopher
William S. Cohen
Lawrence S. Eagleburger
Carla A. Hills
Michael Kantor
Henry A. Kissinger
Anthony Lake
Robert S. McNamara
Colin L. Powell
Robert E. Rubin
George P. Shultz
Robert S. Strauss
Clayton K. Yeutter

Cc: The Honorable Charles Grassley, the Honorable Max Baucus, the Honorable William Thomas and the Honorable Charles Rangel