

GE Supports PNTR for Vietnam

The General Electric Company strongly supports S. 3495 (and its House companion bill, H. R. 5602) which authorizes the President to extend permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) to Vietnam.

Vietnam is now nearing completion of its negotiations to accede to the WTO and become a fully integrated member of the world trading community. The bilateral WTO agreement that the United States and Vietnam signed in May 2006 ensures that Vietnam's accession to the WTO will be of immediate and long-term benefit to the General Electric Company and the overall American business community.

GE has been in Vietnam since 1991, first selling medical equipment under a humanitarian exemption to the US embargo, and evolving to a growing business today selling aircraft engines, power generation equipment, hydroelectric equipment, and, hopefully in the near future, consumer financial services. GE's sales in Vietnam have grown as U.S. relations with Vietnam have been gradually normalized.

Vietnam's accession to WTO will mean its commitment to increased disciplines in the areas of intellectual property rights, dispute settlement, transparency, distribution rights, and services. These provisions will insure that our businesses in Vietnam have the same level playing field that they do in other WTO member countries. We will benefit from the dramatic reduction in Vietnam's tariffs, as well as the liberalization of its services market, particularly financial services and energy services. GE's increased ability to export to Vietnam will benefit workers in our plants around the United States, including Ohio, South Carolina, New York and Pennsylvania.

In order for GE and the larger US business community to reap the benefits of Vietnam's market opening commitments, the US must accord PNTR to Vietnam by the time of its WTO accession, which is expected sometime this fall. We urge the Congress to approve this legislation, which would allow the business community to benefit from Vietnam's WTO accession, and complete the final step in the normalization of relations between the US and Vietnam.