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****AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY****

Thank you for the introduction, Ron [Langston]. Welcome, everyone. I am delighted to be able to join you for this MED Week, activity today. I had a chance to touch base with owners of small and medium-sized businesses here today, and some of the sponsors. The bottom line is that you are the ones who benefit the most from what the team at the U.S. Trade Representative office and I do – opening markets for you.

Now, a major U.S. corporation or multinational, when they come across a trade barrier overseas, they can go behind that barrier and invest in a facility. They can open a storefront. As small and medium-sized businesses owners, you don't have that luxury, you don't have that kind of capital, and you need to confront those barriers head on.

That's where the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative comes in.

It is our job to knock down these barriers, to negotiate down these barriers, to create a level playing for American workers, American farmers, American businesses for those of you, who have an interest in doing business outside of our borders. We do this by negotiating multilateral trade agreements, bilateral, regional trade agreements and by enforcing existing agreements.

Now, it doesn't come as a surprise to anyone here to know that there are segments of our economy that are under stress, but our exports are booming.

Over the four most recent quarters of our economy, U.S. exports accounted for 60 percent of our economic growth. It is very clear that many U.S. companies, many U.S. entrepreneurs have recognized the importance of access to foreign markets and of diversifying their customer base. The fact of the matter is, international trade means jobs.

And those jobs are not just jobs in the firms that happens to be exporting. Trade is a positive sum game. It is a positive sum game because of its multiplier effect. It's a positive sum game because it's not just the American partners, but also the international partners, who benefits from trade.

Now in my business, we throw around a lot of aggregate statistics, a lot of big numbers – a lot of big numbers that many small and medium-sized companies can't necessarily identify with. But in the international trade business, every one of those numbers is made up of one transaction at a time, one deal at a time, one entrepreneurial exchange at a time.

Therefore, behind all of our statistics are very real entrepreneurs, people who are living the American Dream. And these individuals, and these companies don't limit themselves to the American market, but are interested in selling to the other 95 percent of the world population that lives outside our borders.



These are people like Lisa Phillip, president and owner of Hybas International.

Lisa is the African-American president and owner of an export trading company. She started the business a few years ago and sells all types of processed foods, including coffee, canned goods and toothpaste. And at the request of the customers, Hybas has expanded its sales in recent years to include chemicals and industrial goods.

She now sells her products in countries as diverse as Trinidad and Tobago, Belarus, Dubai and Singapore, with plans to spread into other markets as well.

Another person who can testify to the power of working across borders is Cecilia Ochoa Levine. She is the president of MFI International and she works with manufacturers on both sides of the border between her native Mexico and her long-time home, here in the United States.

And she has been incredibly successful working with U.S. companies to remain competitive in the world market by setting up production sharing arrangements across borders, sharing arrangements between the United States, Latin America and Asia. She also works with European companies that want to locate closer to the U.S. market.

Her job is to help them establish a manufacturing presence along the U.S.-Mexican border and to locate high quality suppliers to support their operations. In fact, President Bush recognized her success by appointing her to the President's Export Council of leading trade advisors.

Ms. Levine is a naturalized U.S. Citizen and is living proof that U.S. minority firms can have a real competitive advantage when it comes to exporting due their language skills, ease of movement between cultures and business agility.

She is also proof that the United States is still a leader in manufacturing.

It never ceases to amaze me, particularly in this political season, when you listen to Congress and media pundits decry the demise of U.S. manufacturing or U.S. competitiveness in manufacturing or services. They claim that we are exporting all of our jobs overseas.

In actual fact, not only do Americans still make "stuff," but according to the World Bank, the United States remains the Number 1 manufacturer in the world. You wouldn't know that by listening to many of our politicians or media pundits. Yet, we are still by far the largest manufacturing country in the world with value added of \$1.7 Trillion.

We produced almost two times more than the second largest, principle manufacturer of the world – Japan. And significantly more than China, the third largest manufacturer. Again, look at the facts.