

# Spartanburg Herald-Journal

## Counterpoint: Trade pacts have aided the US

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May 1, 2016

Americans have a love-hate relationship with international trade. Every day we enjoy its fruits, which include better and more affordable products; access to a larger pool of customers, suppliers and capital; and greater employment and business opportunities with foreign companies operating in the United States.

Yet many of us cheer when politicians take to the stump and promise to erect trade barriers, restrict foreign investment and tear up trade agreements.

Despite the bluster of campaigning politicians, free trade is essential to our prosperity and free trade agreements have helped deliver its bounty.

Study after study has shown that countries more open to the global economy grow faster and achieve higher incomes than those that are relatively closed.

The real benefits of trade are measured by the value of imports that can be obtained for a given unit of exports — the so-called terms of trade. Trade barriers at home make imports more expensive and reduce the amount that can be purchased with a given unit of exports.

Trade restrictions penalize consumers, import-using industries and taxpayers. Intermediate goods and capital equipment account for about half the value of all U.S. imports. Our tariffs and other barriers to those imports raise the costs of production for U.S. businesses and impede investment, production and job creation.

In 1995, the United States had free trade agreements only with Israel, Canada and Mexico. Today there are 14 U.S. free trade agreements with 20 countries, and two substantial “megaregional” agreements — the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership — waiting in the wings.

Together, the agreements include countries representing 70 percent of global GDP and 75 percent of global trade.

Free trade agreements have helped reduce domestic impediments to trade, expand our economic freedoms and lock in positive reforms.

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