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Closet survey shows we love free trade

Friday, April 09, 2010

By **Marian Accardi**

Times Business Writer marian.accardi@htimes.com

'Americans have voted with dollars,' policy expert says

Daniel Griswold has a challenge for people who bash free trade and globalization: Check the tags on every piece of clothing in your closet.

Chances are, there will be a global collection of items, as Griswold found himself when he conducted his own closet survey one Saturday afternoon about a year ago.

Of the 120 items he checked - such as pants, suits, T-shirts and dress shirts - only 10 of them were made in America, and nine were neckties.

"We Americans have voted (on trade), with our dollars," said Griswold, author of "Mad About Trade: Why Main Street America Should Embrace Globalization." He's also director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies at the Washington, D.C., think tank, the Cato Institute.

Griswold spoke Thursday at the North Alabama International Trade Association's World Trade Day luncheon at The Westin Huntsville.

"A lot of Americans are mad about trade," Griswold said, but Americans should instead be mad "as in crazy" about the opportunities it provides.

"Trade is the working family's best friend," he said. Trade competition, he said, delivers lower prices, more choice and better quality. "The biggest winners from free trade are American consumers."

In Alabama alone, 2,600 companies export products - from vehicle engines to poultry - to the rest of the world, Griswold said. Germany, Canada, Mexico, Japan and China are the state's top trading partners.

As for the impact of trade expansion in job losses, Griswold said that trade accounts for about 3 percent of the annual gross job displacement. The number of workers who lose their jobs because of growing trade, offshoring and outsourcing is probably in the range of 300,000 to 500,000 a year, he said.

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