

Commentary: If elected president, I'll level the playing field on global trade, Clinton says

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By Hillary Clinton Special to the Press Herald

'Made in the USA' – that label has always been a mark of quality and pride around the world. American manufacturing has gone through hard times, but we're working our way back from the worst of the economic crisis. Under President Obama, we've saved the auto industry and added over 900,000 manufacturing jobs. Exports are up 40 percent.

But even those hard-won gains are at risk. A stronger dollar, slowing Chinese economy and global economic turbulence mean that workers in industries from steel to auto parts are facing headwinds.

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Hillary Clinton is a Democratic candidate for U.S. president.

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At the same time, China and other countries are using underhanded and unfair trade practices to tilt the playing field against American workers and businesses. When they dump cheap products in our markets, subsidize state-owned enterprises, manipulate currencies and discriminate against American companies, our middle class pays the price. That has to stop.

Ninety-five percent of America's potential customers live overseas, so closing ourselves off to trade is not a solution. But we have to make sure we are all playing by the same rules. As a senator, I pressured the Bush administration to get tougher on China. As secretary of state, I fought to protect American workers in the global marketplace. As president, my goal will be to [win](#) the global competition for the good-paying manufacturing jobs of the future.

- First, we have to strongly enforce trade rules to ensure American workers aren't being cheated. Too often, the federal government has put the burden of initiating trade cases on workers and unions, and failed to take action until after the damage is done and workers have been laid off.

That's backward: The government should be enforcing the law from the beginning, and workers should be able to focus on doing their jobs. To make sure it gets done, we should establish and empower a new chief trade prosecutor reporting directly to the president, triple the number of trade enforcement officers and build new early-warning systems so we can intervene before trade violations cost American jobs.

We should also hold other countries accountable for meeting internationally sanctioned labor standards – fighting against child and slave labor and for the basic rights of workers to organize around the world.

- Second, we have to stand up to Chinese abuses. Right now, Washington is considering Beijing's request for "market economy" status. That sounds pretty obscure. But here's the rub – if they get market economy status, it would defang our anti-dumping laws and let cheap products flood into our markets. So we should reply with only one word: No.

With thousands of state-owned enterprises; massive subsidies for domestic industry; systematic, state-sponsored efforts to steal business secrets; and blatant refusal to play by the rules, China is far from a market economy. If

China wants to be treated like a market economy, it needs to act like one.

- Third, we need to crack down on currency manipulation – which can be destructive for American workers. China, Japan and other Asian economies kept their goods artificially cheap for years by holding down the value of their currencies.

I've fought against these unfair practices before, and I will do it again. Tough new surveillance, transparency and monitoring regimes are part of the answer – but only part. We need to expand our toolbox to include effective new remedies, such as duties or tariffs and other measures.

- Fourth, we need to stop rewarding U.S. companies for shipping jobs overseas by closing loopholes and ending tax write-offs – and encouraging “in-sourcing” here in America instead. Two HVAC plants in Indiana recently decided to move abroad, costing 2,100 jobs – and likely pocketing a tax deduction.

They're not just turning their back on the workers and community that supported them for years, they're turning their back on America. As president, I'll also end so-called “inversions” that allow multinational businesses to avoid paying U.S. taxes by moving overseas in name only.

- Fifth, we have to set a high bar for any new trade agreements, and only support them if they will create good jobs, raise wages and advance our national security. I opposed the Trans-Pacific Partnership when it failed to meet those tests, and would oppose future agreements if they failed to meet that bar.

America spent generations working with partners to develop strong and fair rules of the road for the global economy – but those rules only work if we enforce them. Tough enforcement and other smart policies to support a manufacturing renaissance are the only way we can ensure that trade helps American workers. If I'm elected president, that's what I'll do.

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