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**Over 150 Manufacturing and Agricultural Interests Combine to Form
"Alliance to Keep U.S. Jobs"
*Coalition Urges Administration, Congress to End \$2.4 Billion Dispute with Mexico***

July 23, 2009/Washington, DC: More than 150 U.S. manufacturers, companies and agricultural interests announced today that they had formed the Alliance to Keep U.S. Jobs. The group will press the Obama administration and Congress to resolve an ongoing U.S.-Mexico trade dispute that has hampered U.S. firms' ability to sell some \$2.4 billion worth of manufactured and agricultural products bound for Mexico.

U.S. industries ranging from cherry farmers to carbonless paper manufacturers joined the Alliance because they had become "innocent victims of a lengthy political dispute," said Steve Mulder, the Alliance's spokesman. As Mulder explained it, these industries, and nearly 90 others, were subjected to tariffs by the Government of Mexico only days after the U.S. Congress terminated a U.S. pilot cross-border trucking program, an act that put the United States in violation of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Mexico has said it will not remove the tariffs until the U.S. Government reinstates the cross-border program or otherwise adheres to the NAFTA accord, under which Mexican trucks are permitted to enter the U.S. and U.S. trucks may likewise enter Mexico.

Kent Willetts, vice president of marketing and strategy for Appleton Papers (Appleton, Wis.), the world's largest producer of carbonless paper, said the 10 percent tariffs on U.S. carbonless paper sold into Mexico put Appleton at a significant competitive disadvantage because carbonless products from Asia and Europe receive no such duty.

Willetts said, "These tariffs come at time when our company, like so many U.S. manufacturers, has been forced to lay off employees as we struggle to battle some of the worst economic conditions we have ever faced." He added, "Appleton is a 100% employee-owned company. We have very engaged, hardworking employees who are

doing everything they can to help us remain competitive in these tough economic times. But the tariffs were not something we could have anticipated or can control."

Appleton and other members of the Alliance fear that, if they are replaced in the Mexican market by their international competitors, they will have to reduce their workforce. "Once those U.S. jobs are lost," said Mulder, "they may well be gone forever."

The Obama Administration has promised action, including the promised release of principles for a new cross-border trucking program. But while Transportation Secretary LaHood made such a commitment in several months ago, thus far there has been no action.

Said Willetts, "We trust the Administration was sincere when it promised to move quickly on this issue. The competitive strength of our company and our work force depends upon a swift resolution."

For more information on the Alliance and its members, please visit the website at www.keepusjobs.org

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