

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Thursday, March 2, 2000

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
Andrew Kohut, Director

Doubts About China, Concerns About Jobs
POST-SEATTLE SUPPORT FOR WTO

Most Americans continue to support free trade, in spite of last fall's destructive protests in Seattle against the World Trade Organization (WTO). But the public wants international trade agreements to protect jobs and economic growth at home, and improve the global environment. And while the nation backs free trade *in principle*, there is considerable opposition to granting China permanent normal trade benefits — a key aspect of the broad agreement to admit China into the WTO. The public is still largely in the dark about the agreement, however, so attitudes on the overall deal may be susceptible to change.

A strong majority of Americans (64%) believe that free trade is good for the country, while nearly as many (62%) say the same about U.S. membership in the WTO. Those in households that include union members support free trade by better than a two-to-one margin (65%-31%). While union leaders were active in the Seattle protests, a majority in this group (51%) says participation in the WTO is good for the country, against 34% who disagree.

Yet the public has clear ideas about what should be taken into account in trade deals. Protecting American jobs is the top trade priority, cited by more than three-quarters of Americans (78%), followed by maintaining economic growth (74%), and improving the global environment (52%). Among those who cite the environment, there is surprisingly strong support for free trade *and* the WTO; 64% of those who mentioned the environment as the top trade priority favor U.S. participation in the WTO.

Differing Views On China Trade

	<u>All</u>	<u>Whites</u>	<u>Non-Whites</u>
<i>Permanent trade status for China ...</i>	%	%	%
Yes	28	27	35
No	56	58	46
Don't Know	<u>16</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>19</u>
	100	100	100
		<i>Have heard of China agreement</i>	
	<u>All</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Trade deal with China ...	%	%	%
Good	34	45	28
Bad	20	24	17
No Difference	32	24	37
Don't Know	<u>14</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>18</u>
	100	100	100

But Americans oppose granting China permanent normal trade relations by a two-to-one margin (56%-28%). That is a central element in the trade agreement, under which China has agreed to make concessions in order to win admission to the WTO, along with permanent trade benefits from the United States. Even those who believe free trade is good for the United States come down against granting permanent normal trade status for China (50%-36%). However, non-whites, a category that includes many Asian-Americans, are less opposed to the agreement than whites.

The latest nationwide survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted Feb. 9-14, shows that, while there is considerable opposition to permanently granting China normal trade status, most Americans (62%) have not yet heard of the trade agreement. When respondents are told something about it, a plurality (34%) says the deal will be good for the country, but 32% believes it will make no difference and 20% believes the deal will be bad for the country.

Skepticism toward the China agreement — and free trade generally — runs strongest among Americans with lower incomes and less education. More than half (54%) of college graduates say the trade agreement would be good for the United States, against just 24% of high school graduates. Among those with family incomes above \$50,000, 48% sees the agreement as positive, against just 29% of those with family incomes of less than \$50,000 a year.

Wages Matter

Nearly four-in-ten Americans (39%) with family incomes of less than \$30,000 a year say that free trade is bad for the country, while a narrow majority (54%) rates it as positive. Higher-income Americans overwhelmingly endorse free trade, with more than three-quarters (76%) of those with family incomes above \$50,000 saying it is good for the country. This conforms with recent surveys showing that Americans who are most worried about job security and wages tend to feel threatened by globalization and increased foreign trade.

<i>Family Income</i>	<i>Good for U.S.</i>	
	<u>Free Trade</u>	<u>WTO</u>
	%	%
Under \$20,000	53	55
\$20,000 - 29,999	55	56
\$30,000 - \$49,999	61	67
\$50,000 - \$74,999	76	66
\$75,000+	76	70

The divide among income groups is not as pronounced regarding U.S. membership in the WTO. Among those with family incomes above \$50,000, 68% sees WTO membership as a positive, against 21% who do not. Those with family incomes below \$30,000 regard WTO membership as good for the country by a 56%-27% margin.

Contrary to the image youthful protesters presented in Seattle, younger Americans are far more inclined than older people to support free trade and the WTO. By an eight-to-one margin (80%-9%), those under age 30 regard U.S. participation in the WTO as positive. Those over age 50 are more skeptical, with 47% expressing a favorable opinion of U.S. membership in the WTO and 33% saying it will be bad for the country. Among those over 65, support for U.S. participation in the trade body drops to 39%.

Politics, for the most part, do not have a major impact on people’s attitudes on free trade and the WTO. More than six-in-ten Democrats (63%) and Republicans (62%) agree that WTO participation is beneficial for the country. However, Americans who disapprove of President Clinton are somewhat less supportive of the U.S. presence in the WTO than those who approve of the president.

Jobs Come First

Despite the strong economy, Americans rank protecting jobs as the top trade priority, followed by maintaining economic growth and improving the environment. They regard other objectives — promoting human rights, helping developing nations and aiding U.S. businesses abroad — as much lower priorities. When asked which *single* priority is most important, nearly four-in-ten cite protecting U.S. jobs (38%), followed by maintaining growth (33%) and improving the global environment (16%).

But there are clear differences — based on education, income levels, age and politics — over the relative importance of these priorities. Maintaining economic growth is considered most important by college graduates, with 38% rating it as the leading trade priority. Protecting the jobs of American workers ranks second, with 25%. For high school graduates and those who never completed high school, jobs are much more important — at least four-in-ten people in these categories rank that objective first (44% and 53%, respectively) — with maintaining economic growth a distant second. A similar divergence exists with regard to income. Americans whose family income is less than \$30,000 rate protecting jobs more highly than continuing economic growth; for those with incomes above \$50,000 a year, the order is reversed.

Trade Policy Considerations				
	<i>Most Important Priority</i>			
	U.S. Jobs	Strong Economy	Environ-ment	Other/DK
<i>Age</i>	%	%	%	%
18-29	35	27	25	13=100
30-49	38	34	13	15
50-64	43	33	13	11
65+	38	37	14	11
Party				
Republican	34	39	14	13
Democrat	42	29	18	11
Independent	38	30	16	16
Education				
College Grad	25	38	19	18
Some College	34	36	17	13
H.S. Grad	44	29	16	11
Less than H.S.	53	27	12	8

Improving the global environment is a particularly important trade priority for young people. Among those under age 30, one-quarter considers it most important, placing it behind jobs (35%) and maintaining growth (27%); only about half as many of those age 30-49 (13%) rate it that highly. Women under the age of 30 rate improving the environment as *more* important than maintaining economic growth.

Republicans and Democrats have different trade priorities, with GOP partisans rating economic growth as most important and Democrats citing jobs first. Members of the two parties also disagree over how much importance to place on improving the global environment. Six-in-ten Democrats consider it a top priority and 18% regards it as most important. Only 40% of Republicans consider the environment a top trade priority and 14% regards it as most important.

Mixed Verdict on China Trade

Overall, opposition to permanently granting China normal trade relations is largely unchanged since last June, when 54% were opposed to that idea and 32% in favor. College graduates and upper-income Americans, in spite of their support for free trade and the WTO, are adamantly opposed to granting China this benefit: College graduates say no by nearly a two-to-one margin (60%-31%), while those with family incomes above \$50,000 are opposed, 58%-32%

Still, most Americans say they have not yet heard of the proposed agreement with China. Only 22% of young people (age 18-29), 20% of African-Americans and 23% of those with family incomes of under \$20,000 know about the deal. A majority of college graduates, Americans over age 50 and those with incomes of \$75,000 and above say they are aware of the agreement.

Those who know about the proposed deal endorse it by a sizeable margin — 45% says it will be good for the country, 24% believes it will make no difference, while 24% says it will be bad for the country. Six-in-ten Americans who have heard of the agreement *and* believe in free trade back the deal, against 24% who says it will make no difference, and just 10% who opposes it. Among those who haven't heard about the agreement, most (37%) say it will make no difference, while 28% thinks it will be beneficial and 17% has a negative view.

Americans who cite protecting jobs as a top trade priority are skeptical of the agreement — almost as many say it will be bad for the country (25%) as good (29%), while 35% believes it will make no difference. Those who say maintaining economic growth is a high priority have a much more favorable view; four-in-ten (40%) say it will be good for the country. Among those who cite the global environment as a top priority, 35% holds a favorable view.

The attitudes of members of union households on this question are not markedly different from the rest of the public. About one-third (32%) of this group says the agreement is good for the country (against 34% of the public); 22% has a negative view (20%, public); and 29% believes it will make no difference (32%, public).

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

Results for the survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among a nationwide sample of 1,330 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period February 9-14, 2000. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. For results based on either Form 1 (N=661) or Form 2 (N=669), the sampling error is plus or minus 5 percentage points. For results based on registered voters (N=971), the sampling error is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
FEBRUARY 2000 NEWS INTEREST INDEX
—FINAL TOPLINE—
February 9-14, 2000
N=1,330

On another subject...

ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=661]:

Q.38F1 In general, do you think that free trade with other countries is good or bad for the United States?

64	Good
27	Bad
<u>9</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)
100	

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=669]:

Q.38aF2 Do you think U.S. participation in the World Trade Organization is good or bad for the United States?

62	Good
22	Bad
<u>16</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)
100	

ASK ALL:

Q.39 In deciding U.S. policies about trading with other countries, how much priority should be given to each of the following. First, (INSERT ITEM; ROTATE). Do you think this should have top priority, some priority or no priority at all?

		<u>Top</u> <u>Priority</u>	<u>Some</u> <u>Priority</u>	<u>No</u> <u>Priority</u>	<u>(VOL)</u> <u>DK/Ref</u>
a.	Protecting the jobs of American workers	78	19	2	1=100
b.	Aiding the interests of US businesses abroad	19	61	16	4=100
c.	Promoting and defending human rights in other countries	28	55	15	2=100
d.	Improving the global environment	52	42	4	2=100
e.	Helping improve the living standards in developing nations	23	62	13	2=100
f.	Keeping the American economy growing	74	24	1	1=100

IF RESPONDENT ASSIGNS "1" TOP PRIORITY TO MORE THAN ONE ITEM IN Q.39, ASK [N=1077]:

Q.39a Of all the items you think should be top priority (READ BACK ALL RESPONSES CODED AS "1" IN Q.39), which ONE would you say is the most important?

38	Protecting the jobs of American workers
1	Aiding the interests of US businesses abroad
6	Promoting and defending human rights in other countries
16	Improving the global environment
4	Helping improve the living standards in developing nations
33	Keeping the American economy growing
<u>2</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)
100	

NO QUESTION 40 OR 41

ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=661]:

Q.42F1 As you may know, the United States grants a trade status to most nations it trades with known as normal trade relations. In your opinion, should the U.S. permanently grant this same status to China, or not?

		<u>June 1999¹</u>
28	Yes	32
56	No	54
<u>16</u>	Don't know/Refused	<u>14</u>
100		100

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=669]:

Q.43F2 The U.S. and China reached an agreement that requires China to lower some of its trade barriers in return for membership in the World Trade Organization. Have you heard about this trade agreement, or not?

37	Yes, have heard about agreement
62	No, have not heard about agreement
<u>1</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)
100	

Q.44F2 What is your impression, do you think it will be good for the U.S. or bad for the U.S. if China becomes a member of the World Trade Organization and gains permanent normal trade relations status with the U.S., or won't it make much difference?

34	Good
20	Bad
32	No difference
<u>14</u>	Don't know/Refused (VOL)
100	

¹ Question wording: "As you may know, the United States grants a trade status to most nations it trades with known as normal trade relations treatment. In your opinion, should the U.S. grant this same status to China, or not?"