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MEMORANDUM

To: Reporters and Editors  
Re: U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement  
Da: Monday, April 7, 2008

Sen. Chuck Grassley, ranking member of the Committee on Finance, with Senate jurisdiction over international trade, today made the following comment on the need for congressional consideration of legislation implementing the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

“Exporters in the United States deserve better, fairer access to the Colombian market. To that end, the United States and Colombia signed a trade agreement more than a year ago, in November 2006. The agreement was revised last June to reflect a bipartisan consensus in Congress. Even so, we’re still waiting for Congress to take up the issue. While U.S. exporters wait, Colombian producers have duty-free access to the United States. It’s a one-way street. Commercial relationships help bring about other positive changes, too. This particular trade agreement is a way to encourage more of the kind of reforms the Colombian government has worked to make in reducing violence against labor leaders and making the country’s labor practices more open to international scrutiny. There’s no good reason for continued delay on this trade agreement. For those who say Trade Adjustment Assistance should come before Colombia, those two pieces of legislation can advance at the same time. Congress can walk and chew gum at the same time. I’ll work to help advance Trade Adjustment Assistance, but we also need to see a vote on the Colombian trade agreement.”