

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 21, 2008

Dear Colleague,

We thought you might be interested in reading a letter that the Speaker of the Colombian House of Representatives sent to Speaker Pelosi in regards to recent events concerning the US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement. The English text is below. For a copy of the original in Spanish, feel free to contact Mario H. Lopez, Executive Director of the Congressional Hispanic Conference, at Mario.H.Lopez@mail.house.gov.

Congress of Colombia

Ms. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Bogotá, April 15, 2008

Madam Speaker:

The decision of the United States House of Representatives to stay approval of the Free Trade Agreement with Colombia is a blow to the Colombian economy, and affords colonial treatment to us that is unbecoming one of the United States' staunchest allies.

The Democratic Party's decision to involve Colombia in an internal electoral process is unfair, as national policy should rightly be placed above partisan considerations.

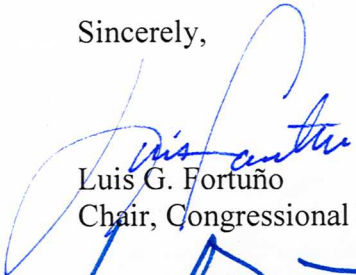
The argument that signing the FTA puts union leaders and workers at risk is even more seriously erroneous, given that under the framework of the Democratic Security Policy, Colombia has made great efforts to prevent crimes of that nature from occurring. The numbers speak for themselves: while 196 union workers were murdered in 2002, only 26 such deaths occurred in 2007. Our goal is to put an end to this scourge and achieve a prosperous, peaceful, developed nation with social justice.


In order to reach those goals, generate legitimate employment, and strengthen our economy, Madam Speaker, we require the decisive support and cooperation of our largest trade partner. Colombia's recent history is painful because hundreds of Colombians have sacrificed their lives in the war on terrorism and drug trafficking, both of which are stoked by consumer nations.

At this time Colombia needs your invaluable cooperation in the process of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States.

Yours truly,
[Signature]
Oscar Arboleda Palacio, Speaker
House of Representatives of Colombia

Sincerely,


Luis G. Fortuño
Chair, Congressional Hispanic Conference


Lincoln Diaz-Balart
Member, Congressional Hispanic Conference


Mario Diaz-Balart
Vice-Chair, Congressional Hispanic Conference