

In Case You Missed It:

U.S. Colombia Free Trade Agreement Would "Stimulate Economic Growth And Help All Colombians"

Congress Should Move Forward With U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement

The Washington Post: "The Proposed Pact Is Good Policy For Both Colombia And The United States"

The Washington Post: "A vote for the Colombia deal would show Latin America that a staunch U.S. ally will be rewarded for improving its human rights record and resisting the anti-American populism of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez." "As we have said, the proposed pact is good policy for both Colombia and the United States. Colombia has long enjoyed periodically renewable tariff-free access to the U.S. market; the agreement would make that permanent. In exchange, U.S. producers would, for the first time, get the same tariff-free deal when they export to Colombia. Meanwhile, the agreement contains labor and environmental protections much like those that Congress has already approved in a U.S.-Peru trade pact." (Editorial, "Free Colombia," *The Washington Post*, 3/31/08)

- "The agreement is being held hostage by members of the House (and Senate) who argue that Colombia – despite a dramatic drop in its overall murder toll under the leadership of President Álvaro Uribe – hasn't done enough to protect trade union activists or to punish past murders of labor leaders." "It's a spurious complaint: Actually, in 2006, union members were slightly less likely than the average Colombian to be murdered. But the human rights issue has served as cover for many Democrats whose true objections are to free trade itself."
- "Sending the agreement to the House of Representatives without the prior approval of Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) would be risky for the president ... But months of Democratic resistance to the Colombia deal may have left Mr. Bush no choice." "Of course, Ms. Pelosi could make an issue of the president's failure to get her approval to submit the pact and then could have her caucus shoot down the deal. But she could also engage the White House in serious negotiations."
- *The Full Text Of This Article Is Available At:* <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/30/AR2008033001776.html>

Schumacher-Matos: The U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement "Includes The Labor And Environmental Conditions That Congress Wanted"

Former *New York Times* Foreign Correspondent And Harvard University Visiting Professor Of Latin American Studies Edward Schumacher-Matos: "Delaying the approval of the trade agreement would be convenient for Democrats in Washington. American labor unions and human-rights groups have made common cause to oppose it this election year." "The unions oppose the trade agreement for traditional protectionist reasons. Less understandable are the rights groups. Human Rights Watch says that it has no position on trade but that it is using the withholding of approval to gain political leverage over the Colombian government. Perversely, they are harming Colombian workers in the process. The trade agreement would stimulate economic growth and help all Colombians." (Edward Schumacher-Matos, "Killing A Trade Pact," *The New York Times*, 3/29/08)

- **"An examination of the Democrats' claims, however, finds that their faith in the assertions of human-rights groups is more righteous than right."** "Union members have been assassinated, but the reported number is highly exaggerated. Even one murder for union organizing is atrocious, but isolated killings do not justify holding up the trade agreement. All sides agree that trade-union murders in Colombia, like all violence, have declined drastically in recent years. The Colombian unions' own research center says killings dropped to 39 last year from a high of 275 in 1996."
- **"With help from the United States, in 2000 the Colombian military and the judicial system began to reassert themselves."** "Prosecuting cases referred by the unions themselves, the attorney general's office won its first conviction for the murder of a trade unionist in 2001. Last year, the office won nearly 40. Of the 87 convictions won in union cases since 2001, almost all for murder, the ruling judges found that union activity was the motive in only 17. Even if you add the 16 cases in which motive was not established, the number doesn't reach half of the cases."
- *The Full Text Of This Article Is Available At:* <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/29/opinion/29schumacher.html>