

AJC Urges Congress to Pass Free Trade Agreements

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Date Tue, 12 Apr 2011 09:53:14 -0400

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April 11, 2011 - AJC is urging the U.S. Congress to move expeditiously to pass the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Colombia.

"It's a shame for relations with a key Latin American partner that this important accord has remained stuck in the halls of Congress for more than four years," said AJC Executive Director David Harris. "For our mutual benefit, Congress should pass the FTA with Colombia now."

AJC has been a consistent advocate for the pending free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and South Korea. The renewed AJC call to pass the legislation comes after President Obama reaffirmed his commitment to the measure, following a White House meeting last week with Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos.

"Colombia is a stalwart democratic ally of the United States, and deserves to be treated as a true friend, as do Panama and South Korea, of course," said Harris. "The persistent delay of important trade accords that will benefit economically both our allies and the U.S. is inexcusable and contrary to our national interests."

The U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement was signed on November 22, 2006, and quickly approved by the Colombian Congress.

Opponents of the agreement have cited deficiencies in Colombia's human rights record. Presidents Santos and Obama endorsed an action plan to strengthen human rights protections.

In November, the New York Times noted in an editorial, supporting the FTA with Colombia, that "violence has abated considerably" during the administration of President Alvaro Uribe, and "undeniable improvements" in security and human rights protection should not be ignored.

President Uribe, who led Colombia from 2002 to 2010, addressed AJC's 2007 Annual Gala in Washington, where he also spoke about the need to ratify and enact the FTA.

AJC actively promotes stronger hemispheric relations, chiefly through its Latino and Latin American Institute, directed by Dina Siegel Vann.