



September 13, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

RE: The Entire U.S. Textile, Apparel & Retail Supply Chain Calls for Submission and Passage of U.S./Colombia FTA Now

Dear Mr. President and Congressional Leadership:

On behalf of the U.S. and Colombian textile, apparel, and retail supply chain, the undersigned organizations are writing to ask your assistance in ensuring that the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is submitted, approved, enacted into law, and implemented as quickly as possible.

As you may know, U.S. textile, apparel and retail sectors are one of the largest private sector employers in the United States, with millions of U.S. workers. Hundreds of thousands more are employed in Colombia.

Increasingly, those jobs are sustained by the kind of international trade links we have developed between Colombia and the United States. Of the \$21.5 billion worth of textile and apparel products exported from the United States in the year ending July 2011 (the most recent data available), nearly 43 percent are destined for Mexico, Central America, and the Andean

region, where many of these products are incorporated into finished garments and imported back to the United States. In addition, about 1/5 of all U.S. cotton exports are destined for the Western Hemisphere. In the case of Colombia, U.S. cotton growers and U.S. textile manufacturers exported about \$296 million worth of U.S. cotton, manufactured fiber, yarn, and fabric to Colombia, and the U.S. imported \$293 million worth of textiles and apparel from Colombia in the year ending July 2011.

The textile and apparel industry in the Andean region is thus an important market for U.S. cotton, manufactured fiber, and textile exports. Unfortunately, the overall prospects for this market remain troubled because of the fact that the current Andean Trade Preferences Act (ATPA) was allowed to expire on February 12, 2011. That expiration means that all U.S. apparel imports from Colombia have paid full duties for over seven months. These full duties, and the uncertainty that surrounds the potential for refunds of the duties paid while the passage of the Colombia FTA remains in question, have threatened to unravel this mutually beneficial textile, apparel and retail supply chain.

In the first five months of this year, U.S. apparel imports from Colombia have already fallen by nearly 20 percent. And with every month of ATPA expiration and with every month of delay in passage of the Colombia FTA, those declines accelerate, jeopardizing millions of dollars of U.S. cotton, manufactured fiber, yarn, and fabric exports to Colombia and the thousands of U.S. workers supported by this mutually-beneficial two-way trade in textiles and apparel. Continued uncertainty of the long term health of this partnership will lead to further erosion, resulting in lost jobs in both Colombia and the United States.

The long-term solution lies in the U.S.-Colombia FTA. This agreement would provide a permanent reciprocal two-way duty-free partnership between the United States and Colombian textile and apparel producers.

Time is of the essence to approve and implement the Colombia FTA. Many jobs in the United States and Colombia depend on it. Please help us by submitting, approving, enacting into law, and implementing the U.S.-Colombia FTA in the quickest manner possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA)
American Fiber Manufacturers Association (AFMA)
Foreign Accessory Shippers Association (FASA)
The Hosiery Association (THA)
INDA, Association of the Nonwoven Fabric Industry
National Cotton Council (NCC)
National Council of Textile Organizations (NCTO)
National Retail Federation (NRF)
Outdoor Industry Association (OIA)
Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA)
Sewn Products Equipment & Suppliers of the Americas (SPESA)
Travel Goods Association (TGA)
U.S. Association of Imports of Textiles and Apparel (USA-ITA)