

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 15, 2011

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

We applaud your significant progress and recent announcement addressing U.S. concerns over workers' rights in Colombia. Throughout this process, Democrats and the Administration have been intensively working with the Colombian government to craft meaningful principles that promote strong economic ties, create American jobs and strengthen the standards and protections for human rights and labor rights, as well as the environment in Colombia. We are pleased that the Obama and Santos Administrations have placed a high priority on addressing these critical provisions and achieved solid progress to find a path forward for the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement ("FTA").

The FTA with Colombia is important for the United States. Colombia is a critical U.S. ally in Latin America. Moreover, elimination of duties and other barriers will help American goods and services gain increased access to a valuable market. Reciprocal and enforceable measures are critical parts of trade agreements that are a crucial part of improving our domestic economy. Over the next five years, 87% of global growth is expected to take place outside of U.S. borders. Given this rate, it is clear that trade and expanding exports is important to our future economic and job growth. In fact, the U.S. often runs a trade surplus with the 17 countries with whom the U.S. has a free trade agreement; in 2009, our 17 FTA countries accounted for 40% of U.S. goods exports and 31% of our goods imports. The Colombia FTA will help promote U.S. exports because of the elimination tariff and non-tariff barriers and is expected to expand American exports by more than \$1.1 billion, and increase U.S. GDP by \$2.5 billion.

The new administration of President Santos has provided an opportunity for serious collaboration on critical human rights and labor issues. Since taking office in August 2010, President Santos has proposed important reforms in areas that touch on the social and economic structure of Colombian society, including land reform, reparations for victims, rural development and increased formalization of the Colombian economy. Colombia has made real progress with regard to core labor standards and the rights of Colombia's working men and women. Colombia has ratified 60 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions, including all eight so-called core conventions. The ILO has described as "satisfactory" Colombia's recent expansion of collective bargaining and its new 30-year statute of limitations for prosecution of homicides of labor union members and human rights defenders. These are important advances, but more work was still necessary and, as a result, the U.S. and Colombian governments agreed to an important Action Plan, completion of elements of which are a precondition for the FTA to enter into force. This Action Plan includes swift and concrete steps the Colombian government has agreed to take

to address outstanding labor concerns. It is important that our countries have come together to substantively address laws and practices impacting the protection of internationally-recognized labor rights, violence against labor leaders and the prosecution of the perpetrators, and the environment. We look forward to working with you to support meaningful implementation of this Plan.

Establishing strong, mutually beneficial agreements effectively create access to new markets, therefore, it is essential to get these trade deals right. We appreciate your Administration's effort to remove long-standing barriers and ensure the protection of workers, human rights defenders, and the environment. President Santos has turned a new page and launched a national development agenda that places social progress and civil society at the fore. Democrats and the Administration have continued to urge further progress and we are pleased that Colombia is working to make the changes necessary to move this agreement forward.

Again, we appreciate your efforts to develop a trade agreement that creates American jobs and promotes the protection of workers, human rights activities, and the environment in Colombia. We look forward to continuing to work with you on important agreements.

Sincerely,



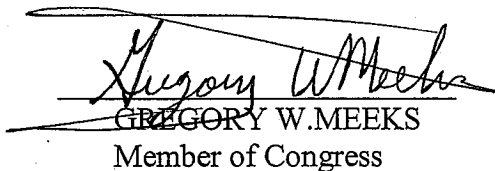
RON KIND  
Member of Congress



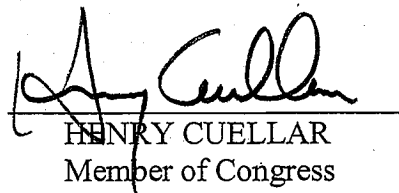
SAM FARR  
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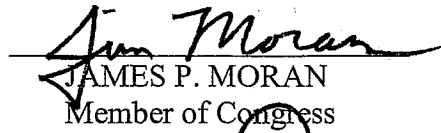
GREGORY W. MEEKS  
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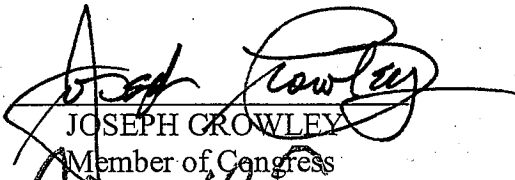
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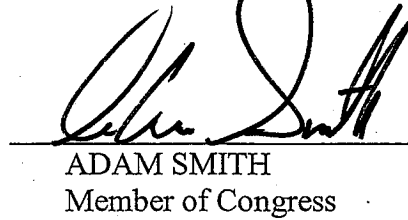
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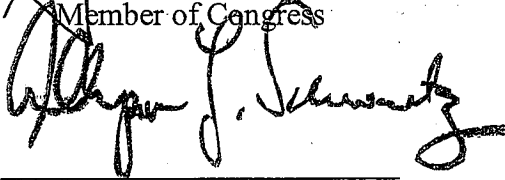
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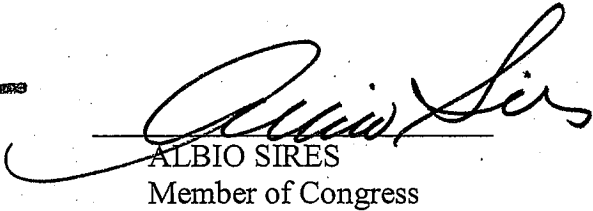
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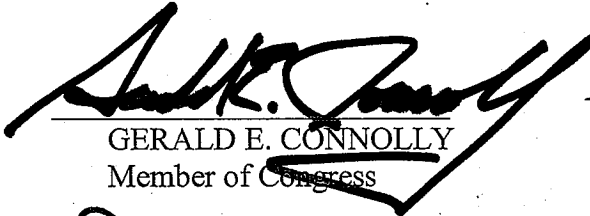
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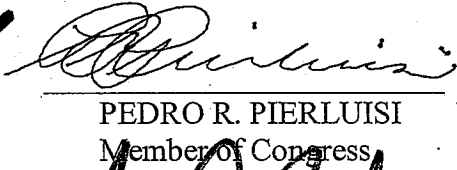
ALLYSON SCHWARTZ  
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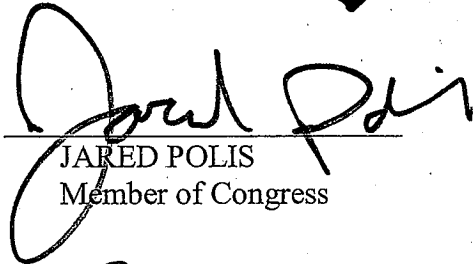
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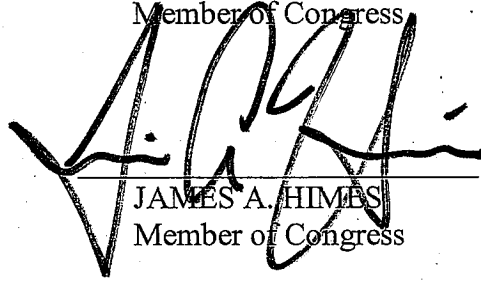
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