



CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CONFERENCE

Congressman Luis G. Fortuño, Chair
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Congressional Hispanic Conference Reaction to the President's State of the Union Address

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Congressional Hispanic Conference released statements from several of its Members in regards to President George W. Bush's State of the Union address.

The President delivered a decisive and State of the Union Address. The Congressional Hispanic Conference is pleased to continue to work for passage of our country's Free Trade Agreements with Colombia and Panama. These Agreements would increase U.S. exports, create new jobs, and spur economic growth.

Helping small businesses is another critical element of our effort to create jobs and improve the economy. The Congressional Hispanic Conference places a particularly high priority on this issue given that Hispanics start small businesses at a rate three times higher than the general population. We will continue to advocate for these principles in this session of Congress.

Resident Commissioner Luis Fortuño, Chair

(P.R.)

An issue that the President made clear in his address is the importance of passing Free Trade Agreements with Colombia and Panama. I am a strong supporter of free trade with free and democratic nations. Not only does it strengthen our allies in the region, but also it creates jobs and economic opportunities for many in the U.S.

I am also glad to see that President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush have once again demonstrated their solidarity with the Cuban people by inviting Blanca Gonzalez to the State of the Union Address. She is the mother of Normando Hernandez Gonzalez, a political prisoner suffering in Castro's tropical gulag. President Bush continues to be the best friend of the cause of freedom.

Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, Vice-Chair (Fla.)

I commend the President for urging the Congress to immediately pass an economic stimulus package. I am grateful for the President's support of free trade agreements with Colombia, South Korea, and Panama. Those agreements would greatly benefit the United States by stimulating our economy and promoting the political stability of some of our closest friends. These agreements would level the playing field for American businesses, would incorporate responsible labor and environmental protections, and would cultivate our partnerships with key democratic allies.

Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart (Fla.)

Too many American families are struggling to pay their bills and provide a decent living for themselves. With skyrocketing energy prices and inflation creeping higher, our highest priority must be to find ways to jump-start the economy and help our families through these difficult times.

On Tuesday, the House is poised to approve an economic stimulus package which promises relief for millions of Americans and owners of small businesses. The Senate should resist the efforts by some to delay its passage. Playing politics with the pocketbooks of our citizens and small business owners who need our help is both unfair and undermines the effort to grow our economy.

We must also continue to help our friends and allies, such as Colombia, by doing all we can to assure that a free trade deal with our Colombian allies is approved by this Congress. We cannot and will not turn our back on our friends.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (Fla.)