

*The New Trade Policy for America is a Good Deal; Let's Use it to Continue the Dialogue on Colombia and Find a Way Forward on Passage*

June 29, 2007

Dear Colleague:

As you know, a historic bipartisan deal was concluded on May 10, 2007 between Congress and the Administration on how to move forward on U.S. free trade agreements. This week that deal was put into action when the United States and Colombia reached an agreement on amendments to the Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement. These amendments reflect the principles set forth in the bipartisan trade deal as do the recent amendments to the U.S. Peru Trade promotion agreement, and they will be legally binding and enforceable.

For decades, there has been an ongoing and often stymieing debate on what trade agreements should include with respect to important issues such as labor, the environment, investment, access to medicines and security. The partisan divide led to trade agreements passing by the smallest of margins and without the support that our trading partners deserve.

We are at a new crossroad with our trade policy now that we have a new dialogue on both sides of the aisle on how to ensure that these trade agreements work for all Americans, as well as some of the poorest countries in the world. While not all Members of Congress may agree on every aspect of the bipartisan deal, we believe this is a good starting point for building a path forward on trade agreements, because we simply cannot afford to disengage from the world.

One of the most important free trade agreements that will be facing the Congress and our country is the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement. At a time when our own neighborhood in the Western Hemisphere is so incredibly fragile, we must not turn our backs on important allies such as Colombia. For decades, Republican and Democratic Administrations and Members of Congress have emphasized the importance of strengthening our partnership with Colombia to ensure that it improves its own economic and political stability, which in turn contributes to the overall security of the United States.

As former President Clinton said just this month in New York in a ceremony with Colombian President Uribe, "We need to remember that we are friends. We need to remember that we want to share a common future. We need to remember that for the first time in over three decades there is a law enforcement presence representing the elected government of Colombia."

Geopolitics aside, the Colombia TPA is a good deal for United States companies, workers, farmers and consumers. Under the agreement, 80 percent of U.S. exports will immediately enter Colombia duty free. For U.S. agriculture alone, Colombia is the second largest market for U.S. farm products in Latin America and the 12<sup>th</sup> largest world market for these exports. In addition, we would see significant barriers dismantled on U.S. services, as well as greater protections of our investments and intellectual property.

***How can we turn this down?***

Clearly we will have more discussions on the Colombia FTA before it is presented to the Congress for a vote. We agree that Colombia can and should do more in the area of labor to address outstanding issues on violence and impunity. President Uribe agrees, as he has made clear on several visits to Washington in meetings with Members of Congress. Let's take him up on his offer and not reject prospects for this important agreement. Such a rejection would be short-sighted. Now is the time for all Members of Congress to take the opportunity to play a constructive role in this critical dialogue.

Sincerely,

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Gregory W. Meeks

Member of Congress

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Jim Moran

Member of Congress