

"The Voice of Florida Business Since 1920"

Associated Industries of Florida



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Barney T. Bishop III
 President &
 Chief Executive Officer

August 31, 2007

Florida Congressional Delegation Members

Dear U.S. Senator/Representative:

On behalf of Associated Industries of Florida and our members, I urge you to support approval of the U.S.- Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (CTPA), which was signed by these two countries on November 22, 2006. The U.S. Congress has a unique opportunity to send a strong message to its trading partners in the region by approving the passage of the CTPA, which will eliminate tariffs and barriers to goods and services, while promoting economic growth and stability to the country of Colombia. In addition, the state of Florida (its businesses and residents) is poised to become direct beneficiaries of this proposed free trade agreement.

The CTPA will provide businesses in Florida direct, duty-free access to markets and will provide immediate elimination of duties on transactions between Florida companies and their counterparts in Colombia. Colombia is a major trading partner for the state of Florida. In 2006, Florida's export shipments of merchandise to Colombia totaled \$1.6 billion, the second largest export total to Colombia among the 50 states. Furthermore, Florida's exports to Colombia accounted for 23 percent of U.S. exports in 2006. Industries like agriculture, IT, and manufacturing export goods on a daily basis to Colombia via most of Florida's 14 deep water ports.

Imports from Colombia also play an important role in Florida's economy. Colombia is the largest air trading partner for the Miami International Airport serving over 147 weekly passenger flights and 86 all-cargo flights. The U.S. floriculture industry depends heavily on imports from Colombia, which ships more than 4.2 billion flowers annually to support this \$19.5 billion industry. Colombian floriculture generates an estimated 225,000 U.S. jobs, many of them based in Florida.

On a broader scale, the CTPA will go a long way in strengthening our country's national security by ensuring that strong U.S. allies like Colombian president Alvaro Uribe have the necessary economic tools to increase the quality of life for Colombia's citizens. The CTPA levels the playing field and opens new and strong markets for U.S. companies, while at the same time providing additional resources for the Colombian government to continue their fight against terrorists and illegal drug traffickers. Now is not the time to turn our backs on one of Florida's strongest economic partners. AIF and its 10,000 members in Florida strongly urge the Florida Delegation to support this worthwhile effort. At a time of political uncertainty in other South American countries, bilateral trade is the best way to forge deeper relationships that could have a strategic payoff for Florida and our country in the future.

Sincerely,

Barney T. Bishop III
 President & Chief Executive Officer

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