

USTR NEWS

UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

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For Immediate Release:

April 10, 2008

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Statement from Ambassador Susan C. Schwab on the House vote to deny the Colombia Free Trade Agreement:

“The U.S. - Colombia Free Trade Agreement would have brought fairness to U.S. workers by finally leveling the playing field for our exports to Colombia. Colombia’s exports to our market already enter duty-free, and the Colombia FTA would have opened their market to the products of American workers, farmers, and entrepreneurs.

“When Congress enacted Trade Promotion Authority in 2002, it chose to enact rules that the United States and the other sovereign nations we negotiated trade agreements with followed. Now, the House is choosing to not honor those rules by changing them – in the middle of the game. The action by the House will have profoundly negative consequences for our workers, our relationship with Colombia, and the credibility of the United States. This is a sad day for the United States of America as the reckless decision by the Democratic House Leadership dismantles over thirty years of bipartisan trade policy precedent.

“The Administration held extensive consultations with Congress before negotiations on the Colombia free trade agreement began, during negotiations, and after the agreement was signed in November 2006. The Administration worked with Colombia, at Congress’ request, to add new strengthened environmental and labor provisions – as negotiated with the Democratic Leadership - into the core text of the agreement. Since September of last year, the Administration has held over 400 consultations with Members of Congress and led 8 Congressional trips to Colombia with 55 members of the House and Senate. The Administration has repeatedly reached out to the Congress to engage in discussions so that we could move the Colombia agreement forward to a successful bipartisan vote. Congress has yet to act.

“I believe that opening overseas markets and leveling the playing field for our workers and families – and honoring the rules that we all play by – is the right thing to do, the smart thing to do, and simply makes sense.

“The administration has gone above and beyond its statutory commitment under Trade Promotion Authority. Frankly, we have bent over backwards – time and time again – only to see the goalposts move further and further away. Changing the rules now only makes losers of American workers, farmers, and service providers.”

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