



Action Alert

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Pelosi's Plan: Keep America Exporting (As Little As Possible)

Nancy Pelosi is playing politics at the expense of both American manufacturers and our allies in Colombia. President Bush finalized negotiations on a free trade agreement with Colombia in November 2006. When he sent the agreement to Congress for approval earlier this month, it received a hostile reception from Speaker Pelosi and most House democrats. In fact, they suspended Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) for the Colombian deal, effectively killing the agreement. The stakes for the United States are high. Colombia is the United States' fourth largest trading partner in Latin America and one of the few remaining democracies in South America.

PLAYING POLITICS WITH PROSPERITY

Trade Promotion Authority requires Congress to vote on all trade agreements within 90 days of the president's submission. Congress gave the president this authority to encourage other nations to negotiate with the United States. After all, nations often make substantial concessions and amend their laws in order to enter a free trade agreement with our country. They do so under the assumption that their efforts will receive the dignity of a congressional vote. With TPA suspended, they no longer have such assurances, and America's capability to further its trade interests has been seriously impeded.

During the 16 months in which Congress has delayed passage of the United States-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, American exporters have paid more than \$1 billion in tariffs on exports to Colombia.

Eight thousand U.S. businesses export their products to Colombia, paying an average tariff of 14 percent.¹ Furthermore, Colombia is the largest market in South America for U.S. agricultural exports. National Review Online reported that "during the 16 months in which Congress has delayed passage of the United States-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, American exporters have paid more than \$1

¹ "Level That Playing Field!" Latin America Trade Coalition. 26 April 2008.
<<http://www.latradecoalition.org/NR/rdonlyres/ewf5z4ixnl2fjw446gwpmtjzrpogf3ubpcyajahvnjcv4ihbqvj6igtvtfwniaoay3z5ybtp276ms7c4dhnj7zjeec/3LevelThatPlayingField.pdf>>

billion in tariffs on exports to Colombia.”² Colombian companies export their products to the U.S. duty-free thanks to the Andean Trade Preferences Act (ATPA). Of course, Congress must periodically renew the ATPA, which is why Colombia wants a permanent agreement.³

SPEAKER PELOSI: THE WORLD IS WATCHING

Economic reasons aside, the United States risks committing a serious foreign policy blunder by refusing to vote on the trade pact. Despite pressure from its regional neighbors, especially the left-leaning and openly anti-American nation of Venezuela, Colombia remains committed to friendship with the United States. Other nations *are* watching how we treat Colombia. Officials from Chile, Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Peru expressed their support for the pact.⁴ Spurning Colombia displays a negative attitude towards Latin America and threatens to further erode the region’s already volatile support for America.

The current actions of Congress signal to friendly and unfriendly regimes alike that the United States no longer seeks to bolster democracy and free trade throughout the world. This poses a threat to America’s reputation and moral authority. If we no longer seek to promulgate freedom and support nations under attack by leftist ideology, many countries of the world may cease to view America as a beacon of liberty.

² Editors. “Free Choice.” National Review Online. April 2008. 25 April 2008.

<<http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=MGZmNTQ4ZGlzYWU5MDIxMmVIMjhmMWUyNTExYTdmZWE>>

³ Samuelson, Robert. “The Wrong (Trade) War.” RealClearPolitics. 16 April 2008.

<http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2008/04/the_wrong_trade_war.html>

⁴ Bedard, Paul. “Administration Confident of Pelosi Deal on Colombia Free Trade Agreement.” U.S. News & World Report. 18 April 2008. <<http://www.usnews.com/blogs/news-desk/2008/4/18/administration-confident-of-pelosi-deal-on-columbia-free-trade-agreement.html>>

ACTION ITEMS

- 1) Contact Speaker Pelosi and urge her to allow a vote on the Colombia Free Trade Agreement. If you are a resident of California's 8th District email her at: sf.nancy@mail.house.gov. If you are not a resident, email her at: AmericanVoices@mail.house.gov. You may also call her DC office at: (202) 225-4965.
- 2) Contact your United States Senator and Representative and urge them to turn the heat up on any member of Congress who voted to suspend TPA for the United States-Colombia Free Trade Agreement. Contact information for U.S. Representatives can be found at www.House.gov and for Senators at www.Senate.gov.
- 3) Although 67 newspapers have written editorials condemning Speaker Pelosi's behavior, Congressmen are keenly aware of their press coverage in local newspapers. I encourage you to write an editorial in your local newspaper to inform more Americans of this situation.
- 4) Get the word out to your friends and family. Urge them to take action as well.

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