



Colombia TPA Facts

Office of the United States Trade Representative
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Broad Support for the U.S.–Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement

What They're Saying:

“I believe that the positive reality generated by the free trade agreement between the United States and Chile might constitute a useful element for the Congress of your country [to consider] when the moment comes to decide on the approval of the Free Trade Agreements between the United States and Peru, Panama, and Colombia. Three years after our bilateral trade agreement came into force, the evaluation of its effects made by my Government, as well as the one of the Chilean public opinion, is clearly positive.... I would also like to emphasize that regarding environmental and labor issues, we are closely working with the authorities of your country in projects oriented to improve the quality as well as to strengthen the enforcement of our laws and regulations, in order to reach international standards.... I am certain that the respective approvals by the Congress of your country of the free trade agreements between the United States and Peru, Panama, and Colombia ... will benefit those countries as well as the rest of the American continent, whose common aspiration is to advance along the path of economic and social development in peace, freedom, and democracy. These approvals will also be beneficial for relations between the United States and Latin America, since they will stimulate trade and exchanges, as well as the global economic and political relations.”

— *H.E. Michelle Bachelet Jeria, President of Chile, from a letter to Speaker Pelosi, April 23, 2007*

“Turning away from the Colombia Free Trade Agreement will not end discontent with stubborn poverty, inequality and political marginalization. Rather, it will lock out a valuable tool that can be used to assist in the improvement of rule of law, economic investment and the transition of the poor out of the dead-end informal economy into the more stable formal labor market.”

- *By Representative Gregory W. Meeks, Op-ed in Miami Herald, June 20, 2007*

“There are important regional economic and political imperatives in favor of the Colombia agreement. It would affirm America’s interest in and commitment to Colombia’s economic development while also increasing market access for U.S. goods. Currently, the United States provides tariff-free access to many Colombian goods under the Andean Trade Preferences and Drug Enforcement Act, but we are not afforded similar treatment in Colombia. This deal would change that.”

- *By Tom Daschle (former Democratic Senator from South Dakota), Op-ed in Washington Post, June 25, 2007*

“The pending U.S.-Colombia Trade Partnership represents a stark moment of truth for the United States, with huge implications for America’s relations with a key regional ally, its influence across Latin America and its efforts to extend freedom and democracy around the world.”

- *By Lawrence Haas, Op-ed in Miami Herald, June 25, 2007*

“All of us regard Colombia as a crucial ally in a region that deserves our active engagement, and the bill represents an effort to have U.S. funds help address the root of numerous problems there.”

- *Pelosi, Hoyer, Rangel, and Levin, Statement on Trade, July 2, 2007*

“The goal was to strengthen and expand the consensus behind democracy and free markets that defines nearly our entire hemisphere today.... Some of our strongest democratic allies -- Panama, Peru and Colombia -- have made strategic commitments to us through their trade agreements.... The agreements we have negotiated are good and fair. Walking away from them now means walking away from the millions of people in these countries who believe that trade and investment are the key to their prosperity and well-being. It means walking away from our commitment to fight poverty and promote opportunity, and the consequences would be felt in the region for years to come.”

- *Secretary Condoleezza Rice, Op-ed in Miami Herald, July 15, 2007*

"We are going to find a way to get Colombia passed... It is very important."

- *Senator Max Baucus, The Weekly Standard, July 30, 2007*

“Unfortunately, opponents of the Colombia agreement have positioned it as a ‘reward’ that Colombia does not ‘deserve,’ rather than what it truly is: a critical vehicle to assist the Colombian people to defeat the scourges of narcotics trafficking and the vicious violence of unreconstructed guerrillas....Importantly, the Colombia free trade agreement would also open a market to U.S. exports that has been closed, despite the fact that the U.S. market is open to Colombian goods. Rather than a reward for Colombia, this deal is a critical building block of U.S. strategic interests in the region.”

- *Eric Farnsworth and Gary Hufbauer, Op-ed in Baltimore Sun, August 2, 2007*

“Protectionists in Congress think there's no cost to shooting down pending free trade deals in the pipeline with Peru, Panama and Colombia. Don't tell that to Latin Americans desperately trying to keep Venezuelan bad boy Hugo Chavez out of their countries.”

- *Mary Anastasia O’Grady, Op-ed in Wall Street Journal, September 18, 2007*

“President Bush wants to help Colombia on the road of prosperity and security. Today, we have the opportunity to do just that. Congress should pass these FTAs. Congress already allows 90 percent of their goods to enter our markets duty free. These FTAs will give our farmers and workers the same preferences Congress has given their workers. We know that open markets benefit our economy. Since 2001, our trade with FTA countries in the hemisphere has skyrocketed by 60 percent.”

- *Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez, Op-ed in Miami Herald, September 20, 2007*

“The foot-dragging in Congress is ironic, because the United States would benefit most from ratification of the U.S.–Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement—as it was originally negotiated.... It will also strengthen U.S. national security and provide, through economic

growth, additional resources for the Colombian government to fight terrorists and cocaine traffickers.”

- *By James M. Roberts (a research fellow at The Heritage Foundation), Op-ed in Latin Business Chronicle, September 24, 2007*

“We should be absolutely clear of the consequences of not passing these agreements. If the United States does not stand with the true democrats of the Americas, who want to better their people’s lives not dominate them, then we will demonstrate exactly what the new autocrats are arguing – that democracy cannot deliver real benefits, that free markets and free trade are a road leading only to empty promises, and that the United States of America will not even stand with its best friends. Put simply: Failing to pass the FTAs with Peru, Panama, and especially Colombia would be a win for Hugo Chavez and a defeat for the forces of democracy in the hemisphere.”

- *U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, Op-ed in Latin Business Chronicle, September 24, 2007*

“The future of this relationship now lies in the Colombian Free Trade Agreement, and its fate lies in the hands of this Congress. The adoption of a permanent trade agreement between our two nations would allow both countries free and unfettered access to each other’s markets — access American exports do not enjoy today.”

- *By Representative Roy Blunt, Op-ed in The Politico, September 25, 2007*

“In my view, Colombia needs its democratic friends to lean forward and give them a chance at partnership and trade with North America. I am very concerned that some in the United States seem unwilling to do that. What message does that send to those who want to share in freedom and prosperity? ... If the U.S. turns its back on its friends in Colombia, this will set back our cause far more than any Latin American dictator could hope to achieve.”

— *Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, from a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations, September 25, 2007.*

“The United States has played an important role in the opening of markets by signing, ratifying, and implementing free trade agreements. Mexico, Chile, and the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic today benefit from the valuable development tool of a free trade agreement with the United States. Three additional countries — Colombia, Panama and Peru — also signed free trade agreements with the United States ... We consider that it would be greatly beneficial for those countries, for the United States, and for good relations between your country and Latin America, that those free trade agreements be ratified.”

— *H.E. Elías Antonio Saca, President of El Salvador; H.E. Manuel Zelaya, President of Honduras; and H.E. Oscar Berger, President of Guatemala; from a letter to Speaker Pelosi, October 3, 2007*

“Congress now has a chance to consolidate the progress and do more to stabilize Colombia by passing a recently-negotiated free trade pact, known as the Colombian Trade Promotion Agreement. This would provide new markets for U.S. exporters as well as jobs and income for hundreds of thousands of Colombians.”

-*Senator Richard Lugar, Op-ed in Miami Herald, October 8, 2007*

“With humility and profound respect, I would like to suggest the importance of the U.S. Congress ratifying these agreements [with Peru, Colombia, and Panama], thinking not only in the

benefits they would bring to the Latin American nations I have mentioned — benefits that would be considerable — but also of the benefits they would bring to the people of the United States...”

— *H.E. Oscar Arias, President of Costa Rica and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, from a letter to Speaker Pelosi, October 10, 2007*

“This past spring, as part of a delegation to Congress with the Council of American Companies to promote the free trade agreement and Plan Colombia, I was shocked at the lack of interest in Latin American affairs among the people I talked to. This is what is wrong with our foreign policy. We are fickle partners who wait for the mountain to come to us, rather than going to the mountain.”

- *Vincent Volpi (CEO of PICA Corp.), Op-ed in USA Today, October 11, 2007*

“In the last 20 years, many countries in Latin America have made notable advances toward the construction of stable democracies, the promotion of free trade, and improvement of the quality of life of their inhabitants. The United States of America has supported these processes using, among other mechanisms, the signing, ratification, and implementation of free trade agreements.... I believe the implementation of these agreements would be of the greatest benefit [for Peru, Colombia, and Panama], for the United States, and for good relations between your country and Latin America. In addition, the ratification of these agreements would send an important signal of our shared commitment to commercial integration and the development of our continent. Respectfully, I exhort you to do what you can to help achieve this goal.”

— *H.E. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, President of Mexico, from a letter to Speaker Pelosi: October 15, 2007*

“Congress has an opportunity to make a lasting impact on economic prosperity and development in Latin America. Support of the free-trade agreements (FTAs) with Colombia, Panama and Peru will open new opportunities for countries that have made significant social and economic progress in the last few years.”

- *Brian Wanko (Director of government relations at the Council of the Americas), Op-ed in Latin Business Chronicle, October 15, 2007*

In this context, Colombia shows great potential for sustained growth that will surely be encouraged if the country manages to gain access to new markets through free-trade expansion, just as other countries in the region have done or will do soon.... Last year's negotiations toward a free-trade agreement with the United States are undeniable proof that the country is ready to take advantage of trade liberalization. Furthermore, the country is opening its economy based on the idea that expanded trade will improve the quality of life for its population.”

- *Pamela Cox, Op-ed in Miami Herald, October 17, 2007*

"Colombia is still being studied by the members, and as I told the ambassador who was here this morning ... we would want to work harder in getting votes for Colombia rather than bring the bill up and having it defeated, which we think would be a rebuff to a great president and to great country and a great ally."

- *Representative Charles Rangel, BNA, November 1, 2007*

“‘We want to see a labor force with the opportunity to be able to organize themselves,’ she said. The Colombian government is making efforts to improve the situation, she said and it doesn't make sense to wait for ‘complete perfection’ before approving the agreement.”

- *Senator Blanche Lincoln, Dow Jones Newswires, November 4, 2007*

“All of us should hope that Democratic leaders in Congress figure out that not helping Colombia comes at too high a price. The time has come for the Florida congressional delegation to step up and urge the House leadership to approve this important agreement that will not only benefit Florida, the United States, but our neighbors to the south.”

- *By Juan C. Zapata (Republican state representative from Miami), Op-ed in South Florida Sun-Sentinel, November 5, 2007*

"It's [U.S. – Colombia TPA] something that the Congress should take up and debate thoroughly and examine thoroughly. But my instinct tells me that if we are already allowing this country's products into our country and we are able to eliminate the tariff on our goods, we ought to take that step."

- *Representative Bob Goodlatte, Farm Progress, November 6, 2007*

“I think we’re making progress on both the economic and civil society front with the passage of the FTA, and I do think it would be a pretty serious step backward if we’re not able to do so.”

- *Thomas McLarty (President Clinton’s former Chief of Staff), Reuters, November 13, 2007*

“Not passing the trade agreement would be a slap in the face quite frankly to the leadership of this country and will also be used by our adversaries in this region to try to taunt the Colombians and say well you have such a great friend in the United States, they wouldn’t even stand with you on the trade deal. There is some emotion in this issue. It is important trade wise, it is important for jobs, but there is a certain prestige associated with this agreement being passed at this time that the President here needs and that we need to support our ally. I came in support, already supporting the free trade agreement. I intend to go back and try to work with my colleagues and help them understand how important this is for this country and our good ally for this democracy to continue to flourish and provide opportunities to the people that democracies typically do.”

- *Representative Conaway, Interview by Agritalk, November 20, 2007*

“I can assure you that during this administration, President Uribe has made incredible strides not only in the human rights issue but you know in the poverty issues, trying to figure out what you do with, how you absorb, you know, the drugs off the streets and take them off the streets so they don’t end up in America so that we can actually start working in a way that we move this economy of this country.... Part of the problem and I see back in Congress is really a political fight between the leadership in the House and the Senate and the administration and I would wish that we can put partisanship aside to move forward”

- *Representative John Salazar, Interview by Agritalk, November 20, 2007*

“The success and stability of Colombia and the Pan-American region depend on our ability to recognize the importance of this agreement to the United States, to Colombia's economy, to human rights progress and to enhanced U.S. national security.... The negotiations are done, and this historic agreement has been passed by the Colombian legislature. Support for Colombia and the trade agreement is smart foreign policy. Congress has a responsibility to act now.”

- *Barry McCaffrey (U.S. drug czar from 1996 to 2001)*
Op-ed in Washington Post, November 20, 2007

“Colombia is our fifth largest trading partner in South America and the largest importer of U.S. agricultural products. In 2006, 92 percent of imports from Colombia entered the U.S. duty-free, while tariffs were imposed on virtually all American goods going into their country. A pending trade agreement in Congress would eliminate those tariffs and create a larger market for, among other things, agricultural products and manufactured goods from Mississippi.....In return, the pact will enable Colombia to enhance its ability to compete in the global marketplace.”

- *Representative Roger Wicker, Op-ed in The Clarion-Ledger, November 26, 2007*

“By promptly passing the trade agreement, Congress will help cement these reforms and send the unmistakable signal to other Latin American nations that Washington takes seriously economic and democratic liberalization. The economic reasons for passage are as compelling as the national-security arguments that McCaffrey outlined. Colombia is developing into a regional economic power, and it is the second-largest Latin American market for U.S. agriculture exports.”

- *Brigitte Schmidt Gwyn (Director, Business Roundtable), Op-ed in Miami Herald, November 30, 2007*

“The best place to start is with the prompt passage and signing of the Colombian free trade agreement, which has been languishing in Congress for months. Swift U.S. ratification of the pact would send an unequivocal message to the people of Colombia, the opposition in Venezuela and the wider region that they do not stand alone against Chávez. It would also provide concrete economic opportunities to the people of Colombia, helping to offset the restrictions being imposed by Venezuela -- and it would strengthen the U.S. economy in the bargain.”

- *Donald Rumsfeld, Op-ed in Washington Post, December 2, 2007*

“...the United States can make a difference in South America, in terms of Venezuelan influence. And here's how: The Congress can pass a free trade agreement with Colombia.... I like to quote Prime Minister Stephen Harper who said, the biggest fear in South America is not the leader in Venezuela, but the biggest fear for stability is if the United States Congress rejects the free trade agreement with Colombia. It would be an insult to a friend. It would send a contradictory message to a country led by a very strong leader, who is working hard to deal with some very difficult problems, one of which is armed gangs of people that are ruthless and brutal -- people who just kidnap innocent people for the sake of achieving political objectives. And so a vote for democracy took place, a very strong vote for democracy. And the United States policy can help promote democracies and stability. And again, I'm going to repeat to you: If the Congress does not pass the free trade agreement with Colombia, it will be a destabilizing moment.”

- *President George W. Bush, December 4, 2007, at a press conference*

“The progress in Medellín reflects a broader Colombian renaissance. By virtually every metric-- security, political, economic, and social--the long-beleaguered South American country has made remarkable strides.... The U.S.-Colombia free trade pact would give American exporters

the same market access that Colombian exporters have enjoyed under unilateral trade preference programs.”

- *By Duncan Currie, Op-ed in The Weekly Standard, December 10, 2007 print edition*

Excerpts from Key Editorials:

Losing Latin America (Wall Street Journal)

May 4, 2007

“A defeat for any of the three would do great harm to the Andean region, where democrats are battling Hugo Chávez's neo-socialist populism. Mr. Uribe, Peruvian President Alan Garcia and Panamanian President Martin Torrijos have all bet their futures on opening their economies to the U.S. If they're rebuffed, the local disciples of Mr. Chávez will say they were right not to trust the capitalist Yankees....On economic grounds alone, the U.S. has everything to gain by approving these trade deals. Most Peruvian and Colombian exports already have duty-free access to the U.S. market through the Andean Trade Preferences Act. But U.S. manufacturing and farm exports heading south still face high tariff and non-tariff barriers. The regional financial center of Panama is especially attractive for U.S. services but is likewise a protected market.”

Promote free trade (Orlando Sentinel)

May 14, 2007

“Our position: Florida's economy wins big when barriers around the world fall. The deal on environmental and worker protections is expected to pave the way for congressional approval of free-trade agreements with Peru and Panama, and raise the chances for passage of pacts with Colombia and South Korea. Each of those agreements would create new opportunities for U.S. exporters and investors while reducing prices for consumers. They would invite more of the kind of foreign investments that have created 6 million U.S. jobs....Peru, Panama and Colombia are among the leading destinations for Florida exports.... In addition to their economic benefits, passage of the trade agreements with Peru, Panama and Colombia would strengthen U.S. ties with those countries. It would help counter the growing influence in Latin America of Venezuela's anti-American demagogue, Hugo Chavez.”

The struggle for Colombia (San Francisco Chronicle)

June 13, 2007

“There exists a country that has managed, with American aid, to stabilize its government, disarm most of its militias, drastically slash crime and foster economic growth. It's Colombia, and despite well-founded concerns about this country's continuing troubles, it deserves our support.”

Trading with Colombia (Chicago Tribune)

June 23, 2007

“Uribe's government has made major strides, persuading tens of thousands of combatants to lay down their arms. Murders and kidnappings, the tools of choice during the decades of lawlessness, have dropped dramatically. The result is a more stable country with a booming

economy and a strong diplomatic relationship with the U.S. Moreover, Uribe stands for democracy and free markets on a continent that has veered sharply left toward state control.”

Trade Double-Cross (Wall Street Journal)

July 5, 2007

“Democrats are promising to improve America's image in the world if they retake the White House next year. Tell that to Peru and Colombia, which are watching Democrats in Congress renege on free-trade assurances that are barely a month old....Never in our memory has a U.S. trade partner been forced to change its laws before Congress ratifies the deal. As a sovereign nation, Peru has negotiated in good faith, even agreeing to keep open the deal's labor and environmental planks to accommodate Democrats after they won Congress. And for its trouble, Peru now gets to watch American Congressmen play gringo nannies to its domestic political process... Rejecting the Peru and Colombia deals would be a strategic disaster, playing into the hands of Hugo Chávez and others who want to turn Latin America against the U.S. And while America sits on the trade sidelines, the rest of the world will keep cutting its own bilateral and regional deals that leave U.S. workers and businesses at a disadvantage.”

Congress ignores a friend in need (Miami Herald)

July 24, 2007

“Helping Colombia is in our national interest. It's about helping our strongest friend in the region, not about catering to a domestic interest group. Unless Congress wants to send a signal that the United States either doesn't care or doesn't know who its friends are -- there are fewer every day -- lawmakers should extend Mr. Uribe a helping hand instead of giving him the back of the hand.”

Stabilizing Colombia (The Washington Times)

August 13, 2007

“While Colombian President Alvaro Uribe has proven himself a vigorous advocate for narcotic eradication who has made overseen major improvements to the economic and political stability of his nation (particularly when compared to predecessors), there is undoubtedly much room for improvement. Congress must continue its trajectory for improving Plan Colombia and approve the Colombia free trade agreement.”

Politics As Local Or Plumb 'Loco' (Washington Times)

August 14, 2007

“By refusing to consider the U.S.-Colombian free trade agreement, Democratic leaders in Congress pervert local U.S. politics and are acting loco, as they put America's best friend in Latin America in grave danger, thereby seriously threatening the stability of Latin America, accurately described as the United States' backyard, geographically and strategically.”

Approve trade deals around the Pacific (Seattle Times)

August 15, 2007

“Washington's delegation in Congress should support the trade agreements that have been signed with Peru, Colombia, Panama and South Korea.”

Pandering on trade policy bad for business, workers (Denver Post)

August 20, 2007

“The trade pacts now pending before Congress are designed to knock down existing barriers to U.S. exports. Congress should approve these job-creating trade pacts when it returns from its August vacation.”

Counter Chavez's Mischief (Orlando Sentinel - FL)

August 26, 2007

“What is important now for the U.S. is to establish a strong network of friends in the region to counter Mr. Chavez's growing influence....That's another reason why the U.S. should secure pending free-trade deals with Panama, Peru and Colombia....Strengthening ties between the U.S. and these three countries will boost their economies and provide a strong ideological influence to counter the power play in Venezuela.”

Lift Barriers (Orlando Sentinel – FL)

September 10, 2007

“In fact, the deals with Peru, Panama and Colombia would give U.S. companies the same market access to those countries that their exporters already enjoy in the United States. The agreement with South Korea would open the world's 11th-largest economy to U.S. companies. Notably, it would lower barriers to U.S. auto exports.”

Free-trade pacts worth fighting for (Miami Herald)

October 12, 2007

“Anything that strengthens the bonds between the United States and Latin America is anathema to the enemies of democracy. This is why it is imperative for Congress to approve three pending free-trade agreements with Peru, Panama and Colombia. Failure would strengthen the hand of anti-American forces in the region and undermine efforts by the leaders of those three countries to bolster democratic institutions....Negotiators have made a sincere effort to deal with the most pressing concerns of critics by improving provisions dealing with the environment and workers' rights. President Bush should keep pressing the case until he carries the day.”

Colombia Trade Agreement (New York Times)

October 15, 2007

“We need both free trade and continued transparency and justice to secure a brighter future for Colombia.”

Rejecting trade treaty with Colombia won't bolster its stability (South Florida Sun-Sentinel)

October 29, 2007

“For Congress to now say that it is disgusted by the violence, particularly against one sector of the Colombian population, and to use that argument to undermine a free trade treaty, is a travesty. The free trade treaty ought to be considered on its merits. If it makes sense for the United States, then it should be approved... Florida has much to gain from this treaty, in terms of financial services and trade through our ports. Our congressional leaders ought to be championing the treaty, not dissing it. Unfortunately, there's a confused mix of economics and human rights advocacy. Shooting down a trade treaty with Colombia isn't the way to bolster stability and hasten an end to paramilitary attacks on civilians.”

Deal With Colombia (Washington Post)

November 9, 2007

“Ratification of the trade promotion agreement would help consolidate Colombia's progress by bringing jobs and income to its people. To make them wait indefinitely while Colombian authorities go through cold-case files would be to substitute some Americans' priorities for those of the Colombian voters who reelected Mr. Uribe last year with over 60 percent of the vote. The United States should not write Mr. Uribe a blank check, but the appropriate means of pressuring him already exist in human rights conditions Congress has attached to Colombia's military aid packages. It's time for Democrats to drop their strained human rights objections to the Colombia trade promotion agreement and deal with it on its merits.”

Trading Up (National Review Online)

November 9, 2007

“But the agreements with Peru, Colombia, and Panama are not about letting U.S. companies outsource jobs.... The new trade agreements simply open the Peruvian, Colombian, and Panamanian markets to American-made goods. It is a question of reciprocity.”

Congress finally gets on free trade track (San Antonio Express News - TX)

November 14, 2007

“It's a good sign that Congress has gotten back on the free trade track with the White House. Now it has to follow through with the other three free trade agreements that will benefit the United States as well as its trading partners.”

A way to boost economy (Orlando Sentinel – FL)

November 15, 2007

“The U.S. House's recent approval of a free-trade pact with Peru was, as Democratic Rep. Kendrick Meek of Miami declared, ‘a great victory for Florida's economy.’... Trade agreements with Panama, Colombia and South Korea -- three more key trade partners for Florida -- await action from Congress. Passing those deals would stretch the recent victory from the Peru pact into a winning streak for Florida's economy.”

EDITORIAL: Peru Is In, Now Where's Colombia? (Investor's Business Daily)

December 04, 2007

“In short, it's Christmas all around, with the free trade zone of the Americas stretching ever farther across the hemisphere's Pacific coast. It is a trade alliance that will bring confidence and prosperity as surely as it will provide an alternative to populist tyranny. That is why the pending trade pact with Colombia is just as critical.... With Peru showing that free trade is alive and passable, there is plenty of cause for celebration. Now is the time to move forward on a deal with Colombia. The momentum must not be lost. There is too much to gain.”

EDITORIAL: Slapping Our Latin Allies (New York Post)

December 10, 2007

“Colombian President Alvaro Uribe has been America's closest friend in South America ever since he inherited his fractured, violence-plagued country five years ago. And he's worked nothing short of a miracle, imposing law and order in regions once overrun with Chavez-backed Communist rebels, powerful drug cartels and paramilitary gangs. Democrats in Congress, however, are holding up a free-trade bill that would help Columbia [sic] get on its feet.”