

April 8, 2008

Leadership Council

Anna Burger
Chair
Change to Win
International
Secretary-Treasurer
Service Employees
International Union (SEIU)

Dear Representative/Senator:

The Colombia “free” trade agreement (FTA) should never have been negotiated and it should never have been forwarded to Congress. But now that the President has decided to force the Congress into a quick vote over the leadership’s objections, you should waste no time in voting **NO on the Colombia FTA**.

Edgar Romney
Secretary-Treasurer
Change to Win
Executive Vice President
UNITE HERE

Change to Win is not against trade. But we *are* against the “free” trade model now being used, and we are against moving forward with an FTA with a government that allows the killing of trade unionists with impunity.

Joseph Hansen
International President
United Food and
Commercial Workers
International Union (UFCW)

The Colombia free trade agreement is an affront to American workers and their families who care about keeping good jobs in the U.S. It is based on the same old, deeply flawed, “free” trade model that has resulted in the loss of over one million American jobs and the decimation of the U.S. manufacturing sector and family farms. According to the Economic Policy Institute, those one million jobs displaced by NAFTA paid nearly 20% more than the jobs that remained, on average, in the rest of the economy. Trade agreements like Colombia, which encourage the off-shoring of U.S. jobs, is one of the major reasons that a majority of the public sees the American Dream slipping away for themselves and their children. Although the Colombia FTA contains some improved language on labor standards, it is insufficient.

James P. Hoffa
General President
International Brotherhood
of Teamsters (IBT)

The Colombia FTA is also an affront to workers in Colombia, and the families of the thousands of Colombian union activists who have been assassinated for the “crime” of wanting to escape poverty and join a union. Trade isn’t “free” when thousands are killed for standing up in the workplace. More than 2,500 trade unionists have been murdered since 1991 – more than 500 since the beginning of the Uribe administration – and thousands more have been attacked, threatened, and detained. Even worse, this violence against workers occurs with near-total impunity: about 97% are never convicted. The ongoing assassinations, death threats, and violence against family members creates a climate of fear for trade unionists that makes it impossible for them to fully exercise their rights to organize, bargain collectively, go on strike, or criticize their government.

Geralyn Lutty
International Vice President
United Food and
Commercial Workers
International Union (UFCW)

Douglas J. McCarron
General President
United Brotherhood
of Carpenters
and Joiners
of America (UBC)

Terence M. O’Sullivan
General President
Laborers’ International Union
of North America (LIUNA)

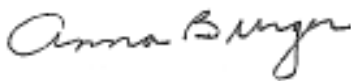
Finally, the Colombia FTA is an affront and a challenge to the Congressional leadership, whom President Bush is trying to bully by sending the agreement to Congress despite its clear objections. Congress now has 90 days to vote on the agreement, but there is no reason to prolong its response to the President. There are no compromises or deals that can save this agreement. **Congress should reject the Colombia FTA.**

Bruce Raynor
General President
UNITE HERE

Arturo S. Rodriguez
President
United Farm Workers
of America (UFW)

Andrew L. Stern
International President
Service Employees
International Union (SEIU)

Sincerely,



Anna Burger, Chair