

Colombia FTA Statements

Wednesday, April 09 2008

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congressman Mike Michaud, co-founder of the House Trade Working Group, issued the following statement on today's expected House action on the Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

Michaud: Congress and Next Administration will Decide Trade Agenda (4/10/08)

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congressman Mike Michaud, co-founder of the House Trade Working Group, issued the following statement on today's expected House action on the Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

"The Administration took the unprecedented step of sending up the Colombia FTA without the cooperation of congressional leadership. I am pleased that Speaker Pelosi has responded by exercising congressional authority over our nation's trade policy by stripping fast track consideration from this process.

"But simply postponing consideration of the agreement in hopes of passing it at a later date is unacceptable.

"We also shouldn't be trading other measures, such as TAA or SCHIP, for passage of the Colombia FTA. We cannot allow the lives of unionists in Colombia and our jobs here at home to be used as bargaining chips for the Administration's misguided priorities.

"It is my hope that waiving the 90 day consideration requirement will effectively kill the Colombia FTA this year and force meaningful changes in the way our country approaches trade agreement negotiations. It is my hope that the next Administration would renegotiate this badly flawed trade deal."

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Statement of Congressman Mike Michaud On the Bush Administration Submitting the Colombia FTA to Congress (4/7/08)

"The Colombia FTA is dead on arrival. Speaker Pelosi has publicly

indicated Congress can't take up an agreement with Colombia until the horrific violence and labor rights record are addressed. Despite the warnings, President Bush is forcing a vote and turning a blind eye toward the egregious human rights violations in Colombia.

"If the Bush Administration really believes this agreement is vital to national security interests, it would not send it to a certain defeat. They would work with Democrats to stop labor leader assassinations and address forced displacement and murder of Afro-Colombians. Yet again, the Administration is pushing an agenda under the guise of national security in order to promote its own interests.

"Approving the FTA in a country engaged in a five decade conflict will perpetuate the violent intersections of commerce and conflict. Colombia's record of human rights is dismal. Attacks on civil society, union leaders, Afro-Colombians and indigenous people continue with impunity. The FTA will deepen the economic disparity, which is a root cause of the conflict, and diminish human rights.

"The House Trade Working Group will continue to do all it can to ensure this agreement is soundly defeated."

Congressman Michaud is co-chair of the House Trade Working Group, a bipartisan group of Members of Congress dedicated to fighting for fair trade agreements.

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House Trade Working Group Members React to President's Submission of Colombia FTA (4/7/08)

WASHINGTON, DC - Members of the House Trade Working Group today released the following statements in response to President Bush's submission of the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to Congress.

Rep. Mike Michaud (D-ME), co-founder, House Trade Working Group:

The Colombia FTA is dead on arrival. Speaker Pelosi has publicly indicated Congress can't take up an agreement with Colombia until the horrific violence and labor rights record are addressed. Despite the warnings,

President Bush is forcing a vote and turning a blind eye toward the egregious human rights violations in Colombia. If the Bush Administration really believes this agreement is vital to national security interests, it would not send it to a certain defeat. They would work with Democrats to stop labor leader assassinations and address forced displacement and murder of Afro-Colombians. Yet again, the Administration is pushing an agenda under the guise of national security in order to promote its own interests

Rep. Phil Hare (D-IL), former union member and clothing factory worker:

I am deeply disappointed by President Bush's unprecedented decision to unilaterally submit the Colombia FTA. Rewarding a country that tolerates the systematic assassination of union organizers would undermine our reputation as a staunch defender of human rights. The Colombia FTA would also wreak havoc on our economy which has already experienced three consecutive months of job loss. The President has indicated he is willing to swap an overhaul of the broken Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program for passage of the Colombia FTA. We should not be fooled. First of all, this same President threatened to veto House-passed TAA legislation last year. Secondly, we cannot allow the lives of union organizers to be used as bargaining chips for the Administration's misguided priorities. I urge Democratic leaders to use all the tools in their arsenal to kill this agreement.

Rep. Betty Sutton (D-OH):

I strongly oppose the U.S.-Colombia FTA and will fight this harmful deal. Not only is it a continuation of bad trade policy, but it ignores the gruesome human rights and labor rights violations which have plagued Colombia. Today, Colombia remains the most dangerous country in the world for union and labor organizers, who are simply fighting to improve the lives of working families and communities in the country. We should not even be considering a trade agreement with Colombia until this horrific violence ends and those responsible for the murder of thousands are brought to justice. Aside from the unspeakable violence that rages on in Colombia, the fact remains that this deal is just another reincarnation of the same broken trade policies. The communities in Ohio that I represent are full of hardworking people with the sole expectation that their government will work with them, not against them. Our trade policies have a direct impact on American workers, and unfortunately, they have not treated American workers, businesses and communities kindly or fairly. By this action, the Bush Administration continues to show how out of touch they are with the realities facing working families and communities across this country. I will fight against the U.S.-Colombia FTA and for a trade model that will finally work for our people rather than against them.

Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH):

It is unconscionable that the President wants to force a trade agreement with a country rife with corruption, violence, discrimination, and civil war.

Rep. Dale E. Kildee (D-MI):

I stand with American labor leaders in urging Speaker Pelosi to use every tool at her disposal to stop the Colombia FTA. It is absurd to even think of bringing to the floor for a vote a trade deal with a nation like Colombia that has an abysmal human rights track record. I believe both of the Democratic presidential candidates exemplify the stance of the Democratic Party on the state of human rights in Colombia.

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