

December 15, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the member companies of the US-Colombia Business Partnership and National Foreign Trade Council we urge you to renew the Andean Trade Preferences Act (ATPA) for Colombia prior to the adjournment of the 110th Congress. We collectively represent a broad coalition of companies in the energy, pharmaceutical, consumer products, mining, financial services, healthcare, technology, insurance, and transportation industries. Trade with and investments in Colombia provide economic development to thousands of Colombians seeking employment in the legitimate economy, while simultaneously benefiting American workers across the United States.

The ATPA has yielded numerous national security and economic benefits for the United States, but none more pronounced than the role it has played in the reduction of cocaine production in Colombia. According to a December 2010 Office of National Drug Control Policy report, pure cocaine produced in Colombia over the past several years has declined dramatically – from an estimated 700 metric tons in 2001 to only 270 metric tons in 2009. This 61 percent reduction has been mirrored by an equally significant rise in the production and exports of fresh cut flowers, further evidence that one of the principle goals of ATPA - moving Colombians once engaged in the drug trade to the legitimate economy - is being fully realized. Over 200,000 Americans are involved in the transportation, distribution and retail sales of fresh cut flowers from Colombia, and the country remains the United States' second largest trading partner in the region.

Failure to renew ATPA would not only directly impact American jobs, but would be a devastating blow to Colombia. As one of America's closest allies in Latin America, and a country that has fully lived up to its obligations under the ATPA, it more than deserves to have these benefits extended.

Simply put, our exports both in products and services to Colombia provide for good paying jobs in the U.S and we support a rules-based preference program where trade benefits are earned by those countries that live up to defined criteria. We urge to you to renew the ATPA by the close of this Congress and before the December 31, 2010 expiration.

Sincerely,

US-Colombia Business Partnership
National Foreign Trade Council