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CONTACT: John Kartch
202-785-0266

ATR Urges President Obama to Move Forward with US-Colombia FTA

The US-Colombia FTA would open markets for U.S. goods, benefit consumers

WASHINGTON, D.C. – President Barack Obama is set to meet with Colombian President Alvaro Uribe on Monday, June 29th to discuss several issues, including the stalled free trade pact between the two countries. The U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was signed on November 22, 2006 and Colombia's Congress approved the agreement and a protocol of amendment in 2007, but it has yet to be passed by the U.S. Congress.

Immediately after approval and enactment of the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement, over 80% of U.S. exports to Colombia would enter Columbia duty-free and remaining tariffs will be phased out within a decade. According to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, in 2007 total U.S. goods exports to Colombia reached \$8.6 billion. The U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement will only continue to enhance this dynamic and increase U.S. gross domestic product (GDP).

“It is time to implement the US-Colombia FTA. This agreement benefits taxpayers by increasing product choice and lowering prices,” stated Grover Norquist, President of Americans for Tax Reform, **“A tariff is nothing more than a tax on international commerce. Since tariffs and trade barriers amount to government-imposed costs on both companies and consumers, eliminating these barriers in a free trade agreement amounts to a significant tax cut for both countries,”** added Norquist.

The U.S. will have access to \$4 billion in new markets and the American agricultural industry will see an estimated \$1.1 billion dollar overall increase in their exports alone. Speaker Pelosi stalled the FTA arguing that level of violence against labor organizers in Colombia was too high to support free trade. However, since President Uribe became president in 2002 rates of homicide, kidnapping, infrastructure attacks, and terrorist attacks have fallen drastically. In addition, the agreement goes further than previous agreements in incorporating labor protections, including guaranteed fundamental labor rights, dispute settlement parity, freedom of association in Colombia, and prohibition on forced labor.

“Free trade is the basis of a healthy economy,” continued Norquist, **“Protectionism demands that the government make me pay more for your product than you pay for my product. Free trade insists that consumers of all nations pay the lowest possible price for every product.”**