

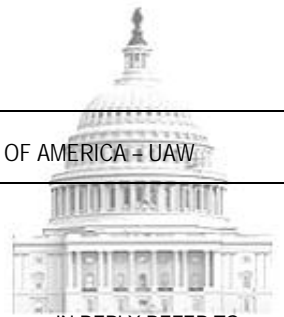


INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA - UAW

RON GETTELFINGER, President

ELIZABETH BUNN, Secretary-Treasurer

VICE PRESIDENTS: GENERAL HOLIEFIELD • BOB KING • CAL RAPSON • JIMMY SETTLES • TERRY THURMAN



IN REPLY REFER TO

April 8, 2008

1757 N STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036
TELEPHONE: (202) 828-8500
FAX (202) 293-3457

Dear Senator:

The UAW strongly opposes the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement, which has been submitted by President Bush to Congress. We urge you to vote against this trade deal when it is considered by the Senate.

Colombia is the most dangerous country in the world for workers who want to join unions and bargain collectively with their employers. For two decades, Colombian union officials and union activists have been subject to an unrelenting campaign of fear and intimidation, including the murder of over 2500 trade unionists. Despite claims that this violence has recently decreased under the Uribe government, the brutal reality is that almost one unionist a week has been murdered to date in 2008, and 39 unionists were murdered in 2007, far more than in any other country.

Those responsible for this violence against trade unionists have not been brought to justice. To date, the government has only secured convictions in 68 cases, meaning that the perpetrators of these murders have escaped with impunity in about 97 percent of cases. Even the few cases where the government has secured convictions, just over half of the perpetrators are actually in custody.

The campaign of fear and intimidation has been successful in eviscerating the trade union movement in Colombia. Threats of violence and murder are now sufficient to halt an organizing drive or to abort a strike. Not surprisingly, union density has dropped from 15 percent to less than five percent over the last 20 years.

Proponents of the Colombia free trade deal have noted that it includes the same labor protections that were contained in the recently approved U.S.-Peru FTA. But these provisions do not begin to address the type of widespread violence and murders that have been committed against trade unionists in Colombia during the past two decades.

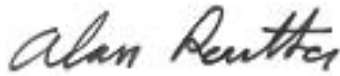
The primary argument offered by the Bush administration to support the U.S.-Colombia FTA is that it will "advance America's national security interests," citing the threat posed by Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez. This is a red herring, equally as spurious as the administration's claim that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction.

The administration has also touted the economic benefits of the U.S.-Colombia FTA. But given the relatively small amount of trade between the U.S. and Colombia, the reality is that this trade deal would have little impact on the U.S. economy. Certainly it does not begin to address the serious economic problems currently facing our nation, with unemployment rising and individuals fearful of losing their jobs and their homes.

Recently the administration has indicated a willingness to consider modest improvements in the trade adjustment assistance (TAA) program as a trade off for approval of the Colombia free trade deal. But it has steadfastly opposed major improvements to the TAA program, such as those contained in the legislation approved by the House last year. The UAW firmly believes that such legislation must be enacted **before** Congress considers any new trade deals. Equally important, we believe that the U.S. should not approve any free trade agreement with Colombia until **after** its government has demonstrated substantial, sustained progress in halting the violence against trade unionists and in convicting the perpetrators of this violence.

For all of these reasons, the UAW strongly opposes the U.S.-Colombia FTA. We urge you to vote against this free trade deal when it is considered by the Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alan Reuther".

Alan Reuther
Legislative Director

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