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For Immediate Release

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## Creating New Opportunities For Consumers And Businesses Around The World

*President Bush Signs Legislation To Extend The Andean Trade Preference Act And Urges Congress To Level The Playing Field For American Workers By Approving The U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement*

Today, President Bush signed legislation to extend the Andean Trade Preference Act (ATPA). ATPA ensures that products from several of our trading partners in South America continue to enter the United States duty-free. With this extension, our Nation is demonstrating our commitment to continued economic growth in our hemisphere and a global system based on free and open trade. Congress should build on this commitment and ensure duty-free treatment for products made by American workers, farmers, and ranchers by approving the U.S.-Colombia free trade agreement.

- **Congress was right to extend the ATPA, ensuring duty-free access to the U.S. market for trading partners in South America, including our friends in Colombia and Peru.** The ATPA also allows us to suspend trade preferences with countries that do not live up their promises. Unfortunately, Bolivia has failed to cooperate with the United States on important efforts to fight drug trafficking, so President Bush has proposed to suspend Bolivia's trade preferences until it fulfills its obligations.

### The U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Will Level The Playing Field For American Businesses And Workers

Now that Members of Congress have ensured duty-free access for South American products entering U.S. markets, they also need to ensure duty-free access for American products entering South American markets. More than 90 percent of imports from Colombia enter our country duty-free, but the approximately 10,000 American businesses that export to Colombia – including approximately 8,000 small and mid-sized businesses – face tariffs as high as 35 percent, with rates even higher for some agricultural products. When the Colombia FTA takes effect, Colombia will immediately eliminate tariffs on more than 80 percent of U.S. exports of industrial and consumer goods and will, over time, eliminate tariffs on 100 percent of U.S. exports.

- **The U.S.-Colombia free trade agreement will open Colombia's growing economy to American goods and services.** The agreement will provide particular benefits to U.S. farmers and ranchers by immediately eliminating Colombia's duties on U.S. exports of high-quality beef, cotton, wheat, soybeans, certain fruits and vegetables, and many processed foods. For example:
- Colombian flowers – a major Colombian export – may enter the American market without paying any tariffs at all, but U.S.-made fertilizer, used to help the flowers grow, is assessed a 15-percent tariff when exported to Colombia.
  - Colombian carrots imported to the United States market face no tariff, but a tractor made with U.S. parts by U.S. union labor is subject to a 10-percent tariff when sold to the Colombian carrot farmers.

- Colombian bananas face no tariffs in the United States, but a U.S.-grown apple is subject to a 15-percent tariff when sold in Colombia.
- **Tariffs imposed on American products exported to Colombia have now reached an estimated \$1.3 billion since the agreement was signed in November 2006.** Congress' failure to approve the agreement is hurting American businesses that want to sell their products in Colombia. Leveling the playing field by approving the trade agreement will make American products more competitive in Colombia and support higher-paying jobs here in the United States.
- **Exports have accounted for more than half of America's economic growth this year.** Last year, the United States exported more than \$1.6 trillion of goods and services. Exports now make up a greater share of our gross domestic product than at any time in our history. One of the best ways to restore confidence in the global economy is by keeping markets open to trade and investment.

### The U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement Advances Our National Security

**It is in America's interest to stand by Colombia and the best way to do so is for Congress to approve the Colombia free trade agreement.** Over the past six years, President Uribe has transformed his country from the brink of a failing state to a stable democracy with a growing economy. He has partnered with America in the fight against drugs and terror and responded to virtually every request from Congress, including revising the agreement to include some of the most rigorous labor and environmental protections in history.

- **Approval of the agreement will bolster one of our closest friends in the hemisphere and rebut those in Latin America who say the United States cannot be trusted to keep its word.** This trade agreement will reinforce democracy by helping in the fight against corruption and encouraging transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. The agreement with Colombia will bring increased economic opportunity to the people of Colombia through sustained economic growth, new employment opportunities, and increased investment.

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