



ALLAN ZAREMBERG
President and Chief Executive Officer

September 8, 2009

The Honorable Ron Kirk
US Trade Representative
Washington, DC 20005

VIA Electronic Submission

Dear Ambassador Kirk:

RE: Support of US – Colombia Free Trade Agreement

The California Chamber of Commerce strongly urges approval of the US – Colombia Free Trade Agreement currently pending before Congress. Agreements like the proposed US- Colombia FTA ensure that the United States may continue to gain access to world markets, which will result in an improved economy and additional employment of Americans.

As you may know, the California Chamber of Commerce is a broad-based nonprofit membership organization through which business, industry and agriculture join forces to work toward positive action on key issues that affect California's economic climate.

The organization, established in 1890, is the largest and most broadly based employer representative in California. Our members include over 15,000 firms of all kinds and sizes, representing three million jobs--one quarter of the state's private sector workforce, as well as 450 affiliated local chambers of commerce and 200 trade associations. Through its grassroots action program, the California Chamber reaches out to a statewide network of approximately 430,000 small business owners.

California is one of the ten largest economies in the world with a gross state product of approximately \$1.8 trillion. International related commerce accounts for approximately one-quarter of the state's economy. Export-supported jobs account for more than 10 percent of California's total private sector employment - about one in 10 jobs.

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In the past few years Colombia's economy has experienced positive growth due to the government's efforts to reduce debt, promote exports, and improve security. This has promoted increased confidence in the future of Colombia's economy within the business sector at home and abroad.

Total trade in 2008 between Colombia and the US was nearly \$24.5 billion, with the US exporting \$11.4 billion worth of goods to the nation. In 2008, California exported over \$419 million to Colombia, making it one of our state's top 50 export partners.

A US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement and a possible US-Andean FTA are critical elements of the US strategy to liberalize trade through multilateral, regional and bilateral initiatives. The agreement will also increase momentum toward lowering trade barriers and set a positive example for other small economies in the Western Hemisphere.

The US – Colombia Free Trade Agreement will benefit those of us in California and the United States as a whole, and we thank you for your consideration of this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Allan Zaremberg', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Allan Zaremberg

AZ:STS: alb