

COLOMBIA VIVE

31 Holden Street

Lowell, MA 01851

October 27, 2007

Senator John F. Kerry
U.S. Senate
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Fax: 202-224-8525

Dear Senator Kerry,

Passage of the Colombian Free Trade Agreement advocated by Presidents Bush and Uribe would prolong the failed policies of the past and lead to increased political and economic inequities further threatening the social fabric of Colombia. Among the problems with this agreement are the following:

1. Lack of support for fair labor practices. The current administration of the Colombian government has provided little if any protection for trade unionists, allowing those who have committed crimes against labor leaders to escape prosecution. Also, the additional protocol that was supposed to include provisions to improve working conditions of laborers actually allows for reductions in the minimum salary.
2. Foreign corporations would not have to abide by future urgently needed environmental regulations to protect the country's natural resources, including the ancestral lands of indigenous communities. In fact they could even prosecute the government for imposing environmental laws if they would result in lower profits, depriving the Colombian Government of sovereignty in its own country.
3. Imports to Colombia would grow twice as fast as those from Colombia to the U.S. Colombia would have to relinquish its subsidies, while the U.S. could continue huge subsidies to agriculture and industry. These U.S. imports would overwhelm domestic producers, causing the demise of many companies and layoffs.
4. The Colombian government would have to give up barriers to American health products, while the U.S. could continue its obstacles to those from Colombia.
5. According to the Pan-American Health Organization, Colombia would forfeit certain intellectual property rights in medicine, resulting in increased costs of medications amounting to 900 million dollars per year.

6. Colombia would be deprived of a balance-of-payments clause, leaving the country vulnerable to huge American monopolistic enterprises.
7. As small farmers are forced out of business by large mechanized agricultural exploitations and because of U.S. imports, the unemployed Colombians either have to turn to coca production or seek employment in the U.S., already burdened with unwieldy immigration abuse.
8. Unemployment for U.S. workers would result from products being made by industries in Colombia paying lower wages, offering little if any health benefits, and not subject to environmental regulations.

The current agreement is heavily weighted towards securing unfair advantages for wealthy corporations, whose profits would come at the expense of smaller entrepreneurs, already struggling to provide jobs with good wages. Weak environmental and labor standards would lead to the deterioration of Colombia's natural resources and to the exploitation of its working people. As a large, wealthy country our trade policies should be more favorable to the disadvantaged members of Colombian society.

Signed: