

Teamsters President Urges Congress To Stop Job-Killing Trade Deals

Hoffa Condemns Senate Passage of Peru Free Trade Agreement *

WASHINGTON, Dec. 4 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa said today that Congress has failed American workers with Senate passage of the Peru Free Trade Agreement.

The Senate voted 77-18 in favor of the agreement today. Last month, a majority of House Democrats voted against the agreement despite its passage.

"It is outrageous that Congress and the Bush administration have approved yet another job-killing trade agreement at a time when American families are seeing their jobs shipped overseas, their food and toys tainted, their wages decline and their houses foreclosed upon," said Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa. "Workers here and in Peru deserve better."

Hoffa also criticized President Bush for his remarks today calling for passage of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

"The model is wrong - it will not lead to job creation and it will hurt workers," Hoffa said. "Colombia also is the most dangerous country in the world to be a union member. More union members are killed there than in the rest of the world combined."

Hoffa said the Peru Free Trade Agreement is wrong for the United States because:

-- Foreign investors based in Peru will have the right to question our domestic laws and receive compensation if such laws undermine corporate profits.

-- Incentives are provided for U.S. companies to leave the United States under the investment chapter of the agreement.

-- The sovereignty of local, state and federal U.S. government bodies will be undermined. Foreign companies will be able to bypass "Buy America" laws.

-- Nothing will change for the 33,000 slave-laborers cutting down the Amazonian rainforest.

-- Subsistence farmers will be forced off their land because cheap U.S. food produced by agribusiness will undercut their prices. The same thing happened with the North American Free Trade Agreement, which resulted in millions of poor Mexicans leaving their farms.

-- According to some interpretations, Citibank will have the right to sue the Peruvian government if the country tries to reverse its disastrous system of privatized Social Security - thus allowing a powerful multinational to profit at the expense of the elderly, the sick and the poor.

"American workers are fed up with the consequences of our reckless free trade policies -- their good jobs vanishing," Hoffa said. "You can bet

this is an issue that won't go away before next year's election."

Founded in 1903, the Teamsters Union represents more than 1.4 million hardworking men and women in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.

* SOURCE International Brotherhood of Teamsters