

# Stop the US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement BEFORE it Starts!

*12 Years of "Free Trade" in Latin America Have Failed - ACT NOW!*

From now until Congress brings it to a vote, we will press members of Congress to commit to vote against this disastrous trade agreement. Join us in holding our elected officials to account and standing up for our brothers and sisters in Colombia!

The Bush administration recently signed a free trade agreement with President Uribe of Colombia. It is a continuation of the failed neoliberal policies of NAFTA and CAFTA that spur the "race to the bottom" in labor rights and environmental standards, and would undermine the sovereignty of the Colombian government. The Administration claims that this FTA will promote democracy, further US national security, and reduce the drug trade.

Far from it, if ratified by Congress the US-Colombia FTA would:

***Weaken workers' rights, eroding important gains made by labor activists.***

Labor conditions in Colombia are a serious concern and unions there have protested heavily against a NAFTA-style agreement with the US. Colombian trade unionists are not just threatened but regularly abducted and murdered for fighting for workers' rights. Even the State Department, in its 2004 Reports on Human Rights Practices, has documented assassinations and attempted assassinations of unionists in Colombia, and detailed the dire situation of labor activists and human rights defenders.

***Put small farmers out of business, forcing them into cities to compete for jobs.***

The trade agreement would create a massive influx of inexpensive, subsidized crops from the US, making it impossible for small farmers to compete with US imports. The Colombian Ministry of Agriculture estimates that if tariffs on agricultural imports from the US were eliminated by such an FTA, overall income for farmers of key crops, such as rice, corn, cotton, and poultry would drop by more than half.

***Fuel Colombia's brutal armed conflict by increasing drug production.***

The flood of cheap US agricultural goods would put alternative development efforts at risk and push farmers into coca production, reversing any advancement in halting the violence fueled by the drug trade. This upsurge in drug production not only would be disastrous for peace and human rights in Colombia, but also would present a serious risk to America's national security interests.

***Undermine Colombia's sovereignty and erode democratic structures.***

US negotiators have also pressed for the extension of NAFTA "investor-state" rules, which Latin American governments have resisted due to similar measures that have proven catastrophic through the US Bilateral Investment Treaty. Experts estimate that NAFTA "investor-state" cases now total more than \$40 billion in compensation demands, through which foreign investors have assailed government autonomy and regulatory actions before secret NAFTA courts.

To learn more about this trade agreement and how to take action, visit [www.witnessforpeace.org/campaigns](http://www.witnessforpeace.org/campaigns).

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## A Week of Action for Trade Justice for Colombia!

*April 17-21, 2006*

Our message: 12 years of NAFTA has failed the people of Mexico and working class Americans, and it will fail Colombia, too.

Our goal: Get Members of Congress to commit to voting against the US-Colombia FTA when Congress considers it.

### **Monday & Tuesday - Educate**

Write letters to the editor and editorials for local newspapers, pamphlet on campus, call a friend, talk with your family at dinner - anything to educate our communities on why the US-Colombia FTA would be dangerous policy. Use the talking points on this flyer, and send them the message that we have had 12 years of FAILED trade with NAFTA and this FTA would be more of the same!

### **Wednesday - Contact Members of Congress**

Reach out to your members of Congress, who will be home during their Spring District Work Period, through phone calls, e-mail, or fax. Press them to commit to voting against the US-Colombia agreement when it comes to consideration in Congress, either later this year or in 2007. US Capitol Switchboard - 202-224-3121.

### **Thursday - Visit Members of Congress**

If your legislators haven't committed to voting against the US-Colombia FTA by now, take it a step further and visit them at their district offices. Remember, they are home during this week, so call their local staff and set up a meeting.

*Alternative* - If you can't get a meeting with your member of Congress, find out where they'll be. Often, members of Congress will have town hall events, and as constituents, you are entitled to attend. Call their office and get the schedule!

### **Friday - Direct Action**

If all else fails, don't give up! Organize a nonviolent direct action to get your legislators' attention. You might organize a sit-in, a protest, a vigil, or other creative action to get your legislator's attention, as well as the media. For ideas and advice about setting up a nonviolent direct action, visit [www.witnessforpeace.org/campaigns](http://www.witnessforpeace.org/campaigns).

*For more information, contact Erik Cooke in WFP's National Office at 202-547-6112 or [erik@witnessforpeace.org](mailto:erik@witnessforpeace.org). Or, contact the WFP regional organizer in your area - [www.witnessforpeace.org/contact](http://www.witnessforpeace.org/contact).*

### **Save the Date!**

- SOA Watch Lobby Days, April 23-25 in Washington, DC. Visit [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org) for more information.

