

September 24, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, House of Representatives
H-232 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
S-221 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
House Republican Leader
H-204 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Republican Leader
S-230 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Reid, Republican Leader Boehner, Republican Leader McConnell:

The Andean Trade Preference Act (ATPA), which has enjoyed strong bipartisan support since 1992, expires on December 31, 2008. As you prepare to adjourn for the year, we ask that you support an extension of this important program to avoid an unnecessary lapse in benefits. Such a lapse, even with a retroactive renewal, would hurt the many jobs in the region and the United States that depend on this program, and would create a great deal of uncertainty for U.S. companies who would be looking to invest in our hemisphere.

Should ATPA lapse, even for a short period, many of the successes we have seen in the region will be undone. A gap in benefits will undermine the successful efforts of those that are promoting export diversification and broad-based economic development in the region.

We do not see the ATPA program as a substitute to the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA), but rather as a bridge to the eventual full implementation of that agreement. While the ATPA has been critical to our partnership with the Andean region, it is only temporary and excludes some products and services. Further, it does not grant any benefits to U.S. products exported to beneficiary countries. The U.S.-Peru Free Trade Agreement, which passed with strong bipartisan support, and the pending Colombia FTA, however, would provide permanent, reciprocal treatment for products traded between the United States and these Andean countries.

As we await full implementation of the Peru FTA and passage of the Colombia FTA, we strongly urge you to ensure that Congress extends the ATPA program before it expires at the end of this year.

Sincerely,

**National Retail Federation
National Council of Textile Organizations
Association of Colombian Flower Exporters
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.**

**American Apparel and Footwear Association
Retail Industry Leaders Association
National Cotton Council
U.S.-Colombia Business Partnership**

Cc: The Honorable Max Baucus
The Honorable Charles Grassley
The Honorable Charles Rangel
The Honorable Jim McCrery

