

July 10, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Reid:

On behalf of the U.S. and Colombian textile, apparel, and retail supply chain, the undersigned organizations are writing to ask your assistance in ensuring that the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA) is approved, enacted into law, and implemented as quickly as possible. Additionally, we are writing to pledge our support in reaching this objective.

We understand that the Congressional calendar is very crowded, especially during an election year, but the economic and geopolitical importance of this agreement, underscored by recent events in the Andean region, merits immediate consideration and approval. We further understand you have on-going concerns with Colombia and urge you to work closely with the Administration to resolve remaining concerns to clear the way for an expeditious vote on a bipartisan basis.

We would like to commend you for your leadership in bringing H.R. 5264, the Andean Trade Preference Act (ATPA), to the floor of the House and Senate and quickly adopting it by voice vote and unanimous consent, respectively. Fortunately, the President signed it into law before the ATPA expired on February 29, 2008. Once again, Congress just barely beat the latest ATPA expiration date. However, the new 10-month extension will expire on December 31, 2008. Because of recurring threats over the loss of duty-free access for that region, many U.S. apparel importers have begun to shift their business elsewhere.

As you may know, U.S. textile and apparel sector is one of the largest manufacturing and wholesale employers in the United States – and still employs about 500,000 U.S. workers. Hundreds of thousands more are employed in Colombia.

Increasingly, those jobs are dependent upon the kind of international trade links we have developed between Colombia and the United States. Of the \$16 billion worth of textile and apparel products exported from the United States in 2007, about 45 percent are destined for Mexico, Central America, and the Andean region, where many of these products are incorporated into finished garments and brought back to the United States. In addition, many of our exported items, particularly raw cotton, are spun into yarn, which remains in the Colombian marketplace.

The Andean region is thus an important market for U.S. textile exports. Unfortunately, the overall prospects for this market remain troubled because of the uncertainty that surrounds short term extensions. Retailers and apparel importers will source garments in the Andean region if they have a more predictable trading environment than that which is currently offered by the temporary preference programs.

From 2006 to 2007, imports of textile and apparel products from the Andean region dropped by more than 14 percent. Not surprisingly, exports of textiles and apparel to that region declined by more than 21 percent during that same period. Continued uncertainty of the long term health of this partnership will lead to further erosion, which will result in lost jobs and shuttered factories in Colombia and the United States.

The long-term solution lies in the U.S.-Colombia TPA. Like the adopted U.S.-Peru TPA, this agreement would provide a permanent reciprocal two-way duty free partnership between the United States and Colombian textile and apparel producers.

We further understand the importance of incorporating an expanded and robust Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) reauthorization into this dialogue and strongly support efforts by both the House and Senate to achieve an effective program to address the needs of workers who are displaced by trade. If trade agreements like the U.S.-Colombia TPA are to move forward in a constructive manner, we all bear the responsibility to ensure that workers who are harmed by these agreements have an opportunity to retrain and reenter the workforce. We look forward to working with you to ensure that a robust TAA reauthorization moves forward.

Time is of the essence if we hope to retain a strong and economically vibrant textile and apparel industry in this country by ensuring a strong commercial relationship with our partners in Colombia. Please help us by ensuring bipartisan approval of the U.S.-Colombia TPA in the quickest manner possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

U.S. Based Companies (46)

American and Efird, Inc.
American Cotton Growers
American Suessen
Asheboro Elastics
Buhler Quality Yarns Corp.
Carole Hochman Design Group
Cintas Corporation
Coats North America
DAK Americas
David King & Co., Inc.

Frontier Spinning
GEAR for Sports, Inc.
Gerber Technology
Hanesbrands, Inc.
International Textile Group
INVISTA
Jockey International Inc.
Kellwood Company
Levi Strauss & Co.
Meijer, Inc.

Michael S. Becker, Inc.
National Spinning
Oerlikon Textile, Inc.
Oxford Industries, Inc.
Parkdale Mills , Inc.
Patrick Yarn Mills
Perry Ellis International
Phillips-Van Heusen Corporation
Plains Cotton Cooperative Association
Polo Ralph Lauren Corporation
R.L. Stowe Mills
RadiciSpandex
Schneider Mills
Swift Spinning
Target
Texturing Services Inc.
Triumph Apparel Inc (Danskin)
Tuscarora Yarns, Inc.
Under Armour, Inc.
Unifi
VF Corporation
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.
Warnaco Inc
YKK (U.S.A.) Inc.
YKK Corporation of America
YKK Snap Fasteners America Inc.

Trade Associations (12)

American Apparel & Footwear Association
(AAFA)
American Cotton Shippers Association
(ACSA)
American Fiber Manufacturers Association
(AFMA)
ANDI-Cotton-Fibers-Textile-Apparel
Chamber of Colombia
Georgia Traditional Manufacturers
Association (GTMA)
National Cotton Council (NCC)
National Council of Textile Organizations
(NCTO)
National Retail Federation (NRF)
North Carolina Manufacturers Association
(NCMA)
Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA)
South Carolina Manufacturers Alliance
(SCMA)
Travel Goods Association (TGA)

Colombia-Based Companies (49)

Austin Reed Manufacturas
C.I. Codintex S.A.
C.I. Color Siete S.A.
C.I. Colpads S.A.
C.I. Confecciones Porky S.A.
C.I. El Globo S.A.
C.I. Expofaro S.A.
C.I. Francisco Rocha & Cia Ltda
C.I. Hermeco
C.I. Jeans S.A.
C.I. Nicole S.A.
Calcetines Crystal
Coats Cadena S.A.
Colnotex
Coltejer S.A.
Comertex S.A.
Conalgodon
Confecciones Antonella S.A.
Confecciones Colombia S.A.
Confecciones Leonisa S.A.
Cremalleras YKK
Diagonal
Didetexco S.A.
Distrihogar S.A.
Encajes S.A.
Enka De Colomiba S.A.
Fabricato-Tejicondor S.A.
Fabrisedas S.A.
Fatextol-Textpinal S.A.
Fibrex S.A.
Finotex S.A.
Hilanderia Fontibon S.A.
Hilanderia Universal S.A.
Hilanderias Bogota S.A.
Hilos De Mosquera S.A.
Ind. Chicco
Ind. E Inv. El Cid S.A.
Lafayette S.A.
Lindalana S.A.
Manufacturas Eliot S.A.
Pizantex S.A.
Protela S.A.
Supertex S.A.
Textiles Miratex S.A.
Textiles Omnes S.A.
Textilia Ltda
Textrama Ltda
Vanylon S.A.
Vestimundo S.A.