

With Bush at the Helm, Peru Free Trade Agreement Will Set the Wrong Precedent

September 6, 2007

Dear Democratic Colleague:

For several months, Congress has worked in excellent faith with the Bush Administration to amend previously negotiated trade agreements, including the Free Trade Agreement with Peru which Congress will consider this fall. Despite the great strides that have been made on labor rights and other important issues, however, I believe the Peru agreement will not set a high enough standard for labor rights.

My constituents are counting on the Peru agreement, the first to be considered by the Democratic majority, to set the highest standard possible for future trade agreements. Enforcing higher standards for workers in poorer countries levels the playing field for U.S. firms and U.S. workers. Yet, Congress has reason to believe that implementing the promised labor rights provisions in the Peru FTA will be problematic. According to trade experts, the effectiveness of the ILO principles included in the Peru agreement depends almost entirely on how they are enforced through arbitration. Arbitration requires the active cooperation and involvement of the Bush Administration. As CQ Weekly recently acknowledged, "In the end, the exact wording of the agreement may not matter so much as who lives in the White House."

Poor enforcement and incomplete implementation of labor rights provisions in this agreement will not set the right example for the future. We cannot rely on an Administration that has treated the workers' rights championed by Democrats as a thorn in the side of their trade agenda to turn around and vigorously enforce those rights once this agreement becomes law.

Now is the time to carefully consider the kind of precedent we want to set. I urge you to consider the long-term impact of a poorly-implemented agreement on workers across the country. Please oppose the Peru Free Trade Agreement.

Sincerely

/S

Tom Allen

Member of Congress