April 10, 2006

Hon. George W. Bush
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to request that you exclude tobacco from the Peru Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the Andean Free Trade Agreement (AFTA), and all bilateral and regional trade and investment agreements that the United States may be negotiating.

Regardless of our individual views on these agreements, we are accustomed to hearing the argument that lower consumer prices is one of free trade's most important benefits. But tobacco is a unique commodity, killing millions of people around the globe each year. In the case of tobacco, lower prices are not desirable - indeed, they translate into increased smoking rates, more cigarette consumption, and more tobacco-related death and disease. The World Bank and others have documented the correlation between reducing trade barriers to tobacco and increased cigarette consumption.

Additionally, the non-tariff trade rules contained in bilateral and regional trade and investment agreements (such as rules on technical barriers to trade and intellectual property) present special concerns with regard to tobacco. These rules are intended to establish a level playing field between U.S. firms and our trading partners. But in the case of tobacco, these non-tariff rules may be deployed to undermine local public health measures designed to reduce smoking rates, even when the measures apply equally to domestic and foreign companies.

Trade agreements must recognize that tobacco products are uniquely harmful and require special rules similar to those that already apply to trade in other hazardous products, such as hazardous wastes and narcotic drugs. Tobacco products have in the past been excluded from the tariff schedules in the U.S.-Jordan and U.S.-Vietnam free trade agreements. Unfortunately such exemptions were not included in the U.S.-Chile agreement or CAFTA.

At this time, as the Peru FTA and AFTA negotiations are progressing and additional nations seek bilateral agreements with the U.S., it is important that we not repeat the mistakes. We urge that tobacco products be specifically excluded from the final Peru and AFTA agreement - from both the tariff schedule and the non-tariff provisions. We look forward to hearing from you on this pressing public health matter.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

SHERROD BROWN
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Member of Congress
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