

For immediate release:
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NDN PRESIDENT ROSENBERG CHALLENGES
BUSH'S STRATEGY ON U.S.-COLOMBIA FTA

Washington, DC - NDN President Simon Rosenberg yesterday sent the following letter to President Bush, challenging the President's strategy on the U.S.-Colombia FTA.

Dear President Bush,

Your Administration announced today that you are sending to Congress implementing legislation for the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement. Your Administration has not done what is required to pass this important agreement. If you send it today it will surely fail, undermining a staunch American ally in a troubled region, and weakening nascent bi-partisan efforts to find a new economic strategy that responds to the recession, shores up our financial markets and once again makes globalization work for all Americans.

In the weeks ahead you will surely blame Congress for not passing the Colombia Free Trade Agreement. But make no mistake - if this agreement fails the fault will be yours, and the nation will be able to add gross mismanagement of our global trade portfolio and a more unstable Latin America to your already terribly disappointing economic and national security legacy.

I call on you to put our national interest over your political party's interest, work with Congress to find a path forward on this Colombia Free Trade Agreement and introduce it when more work has been done to ensure its passage.

Given the warnings from Congressional leaders that the time was not right to introduce this important agreement, and given the stakes involved for our economy and our hemisphere, there can only be one plausible explanation for why you have chosen this reckless path now - the tens of thousands of votes of Colombian-Americans in South Florida. Out of respect for our close ally Colombia, and in recognition of the significant strides President Uribe has made in recent years, it is simply irresponsible to let this important agreement collapse out of hope for a political advantage in a pivotal Presidential state this fall.

I wish I could discern a more noble motive behind your decision, but given that Congressional leaders have told you the Agreement will fail if introduced, then your present course ensures that you will damage our ability to find a better path forward for

our struggling economy and the interests of working people here and abroad; damage future efforts to liberalize global trade; undermine one of our most important allies in Latin America; and weaken our already diminished standing in the region. There can only be one explanation for why you have chosen this course - once again you have chosen your party's interest over the interests of the nation itself.

The people of both the United States of America and the nation of Colombia deserve better.