

**USW Calls on Congress to Reject Colombia FTA**  
***Cites ongoing 'Impunity Slayings' of unionists by forces with ties to government***

For Immediate Release

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Pittsburgh (Apr. 7) – [Leo W. Gerard, President of the United Steelworkers](#) (USW) today called on Congress to reject the proposed Colombia Free Trade Agreement transmitted by President Bush today for a vote.

"It's an affront to working people and human rights advocates that George W. Bush is trying to do what no other American President has done in the past 30 years – shove a proposed free trade agreement on Congress over the wishes of the congressional leadership. No one wants a deal with a corrupt regime that continues to rule over the most dangerous country in the world in which to be a trade unionist.

"Nearly 2,300 union officers and members have been brutally and systematically murdered since 1991. The USW stands with working people in the United States and Colombia - we say no to the free trade agreement with Colombia. Last month – four trade unionists were murdered in a four day period from March 4-7, bringing the total dead this year to 17.

"We are now preparing to mobilize our 1.2 million active and retired members, joined in our alliance with the CWA, UAW, and IFPTE – plus the AFL-CIO and our social justice coalition partners to contact every member of Congress. We will seek to raise the voice of all working Americans against the Bush Administration's free trade deal as another example of how this president is bankrupting America's future.

"The leaders of Congress have our support to oppose passage of the Colombia FTA on the basis that any leverage we have on the Colombian government to stem the continued violence and attacks against union leaders is the withholding of this free trade proposal until the Colombian government can show they are protecting trade unionists and prosecuting those responsible for the thousands of killings which have already taken place. We note that 97 percent of those killings remain unsolved and have not been prosecuted.

"As workers and as a labor movement, we react strongly against impunity slayings, making it completely inappropriate to support a trade deal until the Colombian government meets an established set of human rights benchmarks."

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