

UNITED STATES-COLOMBIA TRADE  
PROMOTION AGREEMENT IMPLE-  
MENTATION ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 11, 2011*

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

After having waited for four years since this agreement was first signed, the time has finally come for Congress to vote to approve it.

This agreement is good for Colombia but is even better for the United States.

According to the International Trade Commission, the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement will expand exports of U.S. goods by more than \$1 billion dollars every year, which will allow businesses to create thousands of new jobs for those Americans who are struggling to find one.

In South Florida, Colombia is already our second largest trading partner.

Our two largest economic engines are the Port of Miami and Miami International Airport, both of which will benefit tremendously from the increase in trade with Colombia.

In 2010, Colombia was the 10th largest trading partner with the Port of Miami, with bilateral trade worth \$6.8 billion.

And 96 percent of the flowers that are sent to the U.S. from Colombia come through Miami International Airport, which helps support tens of thousands of jobs related to the airport and several aviation industries.

These figures will grow rapidly once this agreement has been approved.

But there is more at stake here than increased trade.

Colombia has been a strong democracy and a steadfast ally in a region where U.S. interests are under assault.

We have jointly battled narco-terrorists, leftist guerrillas, and the aggressive actions of Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chavez.

This agreement will strengthen that vital partnership between our two nations and demonstrate to our friends and enemies alike that the U.S. intends to remain a strong presence in the region.

Madam Speaker, it is time to put American interests first instead of the partisan political considerations that have delayed this agreement for four years.

I strongly encourage my colleagues to vote yes on the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement and allow our businesses to finally begin creating the jobs that so many Americans are searching for.

UNITED STATES-KOREA FREE  
TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMEN-  
TATION ACT

SPEECH OF

**HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 11, 2011*

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, ratification of the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement—or KORUS—is economically im-

portant, for the nation and for my home state of Virginia. According to the U.S. International Trade Commission, U.S. exports to South Korea would increase by more than \$10 billion. Increased U.S. exports mean more U.S. manufacturing jobs.

Korea is the 14th largest export market for Virginia goods, and the trade agreement would strengthen that relationship. Upon implementation of KORUS, Virginia exporters would have a \$4 million cost advantage over similar global competitors without a Korean agreement. Eight out of Virginia's ten top exports would enter Korea duty free immediately.

The U.S. tech industry, which has a significant presence in Northern Virginia, also stands to gain from KORUS. According to industry groups, exports from the U.S. to South Korea could increase by up to 49 percent. Korean businesses have a strong presence in Virginia and we must ensure that businesses in Virginia and throughout the nation have equal access. I urge my colleagues to support the Korean Free Trade Agreement.

PANAMA AND COLOMBIA FREE  
TRADE AGREEMENT

**HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 12, 2011*

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, to provide qualified support of the U.S.-Panama Free Trade Agreement (FTA), and to express my opposition to the U.S.-Colombia and U.S.-South Korea Trade Agreements.

The original Panama and Colombia FTAs, negotiated by the Bush Administration, were fatally flawed. The Democratic congressional leadership negotiated substantial improvements to the accords, among them ensuring that generic medicines could be made available in these countries at the same time as the United States. There is no reason that intellectual property rules in free trade agreements should force our trading partners in the developing world to wait longer than the United States to have access to affordable medicines, and I strongly believe that we need to make more progress on this issue in future agreements. I am deeply concerned that the proposal USTR has made for the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) may result in generic medicines becoming available in TPP developing countries later than in the United States. Denying poor countries access to generic competition can mean the difference between life and death. I am prepared to support the Panama FTA, consistent with my previous support of the Peru FTA, because the issue of access to medicines is positively addressed; and I will continue to argue that, at the minimum, the precedent in the Peru and Panama treaties be followed.

Unfortunately, I regret I am unable to support the Colombia Free Trade Agreement. Colombia is a great friend of the United States. We are strong economic partners and have strong cultural ties. And Colombia has been an important ally at the UN Security Council, opposing the unilateral bid for statehood for Palestine. But this trade agreement contains a fatal flaw at the heart of what trade must be about: raising the quality of life for the people living and working here in the United States

and in the countries we trade with. Jobs, job security, and labor rights are fundamental to a successful trade relationship. Regrettably, Colombia has had a long and painful struggle with labor abuses and violence and retribution against labor rights activists. Although Colombia has taken significant steps to reform labor and workplace protections by carrying out the Action Plan on Workers Rights that was negotiated with the help of the Obama Administration, the plan is not yet fully implemented and significant benchmarks for labor reform are still outstanding. Moreover, the Republican leadership has refused to allow the Action Plan to be referenced in the FTA implementing legislation we are voting on today. If the Action Plan had been incorporated directly into this legislation, I would have been inclined to vote for the Colombia FTA today. But this inherent deficiency prevents me from supporting this measure for a country I respect and value as a strategic ally.

Finally, I regret that I am unable to support the U.S.-South Korea Trade Agreement. I am pleased that the agreement makes transformative progress in copyright protection by strengthening enforcement against counterfeiters and extending intellectual property protection to the digital and online domain. But the agreement includes a harmful provision exempting American vehicles from South Korea's progressive greenhouse gas and fuel economy standards. I have consistently believed in the principle that trade agreements negotiated by the United States should not compromise environmental standards in the US or abroad, and I believe the provisions in this FTA, by weakening South Korea's overall environmental benchmarks, sets a dangerous precedent for future FTAs. The global market for automobiles increasingly demands more fuel efficient and environmentally friendly vehicles. We should strengthen the competitiveness of our auto industry by raising our own standards, not by weakening those of others.

I am disappointed that further progress on these core issues could not be made as the Colombia and Korea trade agreements were finalized. I remain committed to strong economic ties between the United States and these vital markets in Latin America and Asia.

VETERANS OPPORTUNITY TO  
WORK ACT OF 2011

SPEECH OF

**HON. CORRINE BROWN**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 11, 2011*

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 2433, the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011.

I commend Chairman MILLER for introducing legislation to allow veterans to receive retraining assistance. However, with unemployment of veterans at an all time high, and those coming back from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan not having jobs, I don't understand the reasoning of limiting the age of eligibility to those between 35 and 60.

I also don't understand the funding mechanism for the program. In this time of budget tightening, and a refusal to discuss tax increases for any issue, this bill taxes veterans with higher interest rates to pay for more government programs. This legislation doubles