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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. SOLIS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

March 11, 2008.

I hereby appoint the Honorable HILDA L. SOLIS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) for 5 minutes.

COLOMBIA FACT OF THE DAY: COLOMBIA IS STOPPING LABOR VIOLENCE

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ladies and gentlemen of the House, today I rise to urge the Speaker of the House to bring forward the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement. I also ask my colleagues to support this agreement. It's an agreement that's good for America, it's good for my State of Illinois, and it's good for Colombia. In fact, the State that I represent,

Illinois, is a big winner under the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement.

The International Trade Commission did an economic analysis. They said if you're an Illinois worker, an Illinois manufacturer, an Illinois farmer, you're a winner under this trade agreement. Corn, soybeans, pork, beef, manufactured metal products, chemicals, machinery, exports will go up. Why? Because right now Colombian products enter the United States duty-free, tariff-free, tax-free, but our products face tariffs. Caterpillar, the biggest employer in my district, 8,000 workers, their heavy construction equipment faces a 12 percent tariff. For a million-dollar piece of equipment, that's a \$100,000 tax which would be eliminated immediately, day one, when this trade agreement would go into effect.

The bottom line is Illinois will be a big winner.

Now who is Colombia? To begin with, the democracy we know as Colombia, the oldest democracy in all Latin America, today is the United States' most reliable and trusted partner in Latin America. Its President, President Uribe, is the most popular elected official in the hemisphere. And while this Congress suffers from 15 percent approval ratings, President Uribe in his own country enjoys 80 percent approval ratings. Why? Because he's made a difference in reducing violence and winning the war against the FARC and the narcoterrorists. Today, 71 percent of Colombians say they are more secure under President Uribe. Seventy-three percent of Colombians say Uribe respects human rights. Homicides are down. Kidnappings are down. Today the murder rate in Colombia is the lowest in 15 years. In fact, Medellin, once considered one of the most dangerous cities in the world, today has a lower murder rate than Washington, DC, or Baltimore.

Now there are those who oppose President Uribe. There are those who

oppose the trade promotion agreement between the United States and Colombia. They argue that President Uribe just has not done enough on the issue of labor and protecting labor leaders from violence. Well, let's look at the facts. Under President Uribe, he's totally reformed the judiciary, the entire institution. For the general prosecutor, he's added 2,166 new positions, including 418 new prosecutors and 545 new investigators, and increased funding for the general prosecutor, the federal independent prosecutor, by 75 percent. Carlos Rodriguez, president of the United Workers Confederation of Colombia, said about this: "Never in the history of Colombia have we achieved something so important."

I would note that President Uribe has also created special programs today to protect labor leaders. In fact, they spent almost \$39 million this past year for body guards and protection for labor union members. There are 1,500 labor union leaders and activists who receive special protection, the second largest protected group in the entire country, and this program has been successful. In fact, no labor leader has lost their life who's been under this protection program. In fact, the murder rate, which is a terrible thing, for labor and union activists is lower than the national rate for everyone else. So tremendous progress has been made.

The International Labor Organization has removed Colombia from its labor watch list. Colombia has agreed to a permanent ILO representative in Colombia, and 14 labor union leaders representing 14 labor unions in Colombia have endorsed this agreement.

Now we continue to hear from opponents and they are really the people who have always traditionally opposed trade and so they've got a different line today, but they always say that President Uribe still has not done enough, we need to demand more, but they never specifically say what more they

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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want. Clearly, President Uribe has done a lot, a tremendous amount, and he has made real progress.

As we have seen this past week, there is a lot happening in Latin America. Colombia, of course, has been fighting the FARC and other terrorists and narcotrafficking groups over the last three and four decades and they've made tremendous progress under President Uribe. We know the FARC in particular are the biggest leftist, antigovernment narcotraffic and terrorist group. They fund themselves by the sales of narcotics. It was recently uncovered, we discovered the links between Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and the FARC, possibly \$300 million in subsidies, long suspected but now proven.

The bottom line is the Colombia agreement is good for democracy, it's good for America, it's good for workers, and it's good for manufacturing. I urge this Congress to bring it up for a vote and let's pass it.

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning-hour debate for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In a couple of hours, the House of Representatives will be dealing on the suspension calendar with House Resolution 936, a commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the Gallatin plan. This historic effort was a plan commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson, led by his Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin, to design a system to knit together a ragtag group of 13 colonies into a transcontinental nation. It focused on transportation, on waterways, it planted the seeds for what would ultimately become the transcontinental railroad, and actually unleashed a pattern that carried through to the national park system, the hydro system and, indeed, the national interstate highway system signed into law by President Eisenhower.

Today's commemoration comes at a critical time, for just as Albert Gallatin did something important for the founding of our Nation, today America's infrastructure is falling apart. The American Society of Civil Engineers rates our infrastructure at a D-minus. It's one of the reasons our economy is in decline. We're losing the competition to Europe, to Asia. China is investing nine times as much of their national output as we are in infrastructure. And at a time of \$110 a barrel oil, will \$4 a gallon gasoline be far behind?

We live in a carbon-constrained, water-stressed environment with an imperative need to rebuild and renew America. It is time to celebrate this historic vision which helped build America for much of the first two centuries of our existence. It is critical that we remain true to that tradition,

but today infrastructure means more than just roads, bridges, waterways and canals. We're talking about railroads, aviation, power transmission lines, pipelines, indeed the green infrastructure, the network of environmental, park and open space that means so much to the protection of the environment and clean air.

It is time for us to craft a new plan, a vision for this century, one that takes into account global warming, rising energy prices, the change in demographics and the knowledge that we know today about how to put the pieces together. Renewing and rebuilding America ought to be something that people on both sides of the aisle can agree with, that we can unite behind a vast coalition that includes the Garden Club, the Sierra Club, organized labor and business, the professions, local government and environmental activists to make sure that we're putting the pieces together appropriately today, that we have the resources, the vision, the partnership that will make livable communities for all of our families, where they will all be safer, healthier and more economically secure.

I look forward to the debate today on the Gallatin plan and the commitment of an infrastructure vision for this century.

VENEZUELA: A STATE SPONSOR OF TERRORISM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MACK) is recognized during morning-hour debate for 2 minutes.

Mr. MACK. Madam Speaker, last week our allies in Colombia struck a blow for freedom against the terrorist organization known as the FARC. As we all know, the FARC supports its war against our friends in Colombia through drug trafficking, kidnappings, and the murder of innocent civilians. While Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has been vocal in his support of the FARC and his opposition to the United States and Colombia, it is now clear that Chavez is increasingly intertwined with the FARC and is now giving aid and comfort to terrorist organizations.

During last week's raid in Ecuador, the Colombian authorities recovered records that clearly show that Chavez has been giving the FARC millions of dollars, weapons, and safe passage in Venezuela. Last night, published reports indicate that the Bush administration has taken the first steps towards naming Venezuela as a state sponsor of terrorism because of its support of terrorist organizations just like the FARC.

I am pleased that the Bush administration has initiated the process of including Venezuela on the list with the likes of Iran, Cuba and North Korea. Madam Speaker, the time has come to once and for all take the steps that will cripple the ability of the Chavez re-

gime to fund its terrorist friends and allies. By adding Venezuela to the list of official state sponsors of terrorism, we will help do just that. Furthermore, Congress must act now on the Colombian Free Trade Agreement to promote freedom and prosperity in the region. By passing the Colombian Free Trade Agreement, we will show our allies we stand with them and against the tyranny of Hugo Chavez.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, March 6, 2008.

Hon. GEORGE W. BUSH,

President of the United States, The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I am writing to seek your support in standing against Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and his support for terrorist groups in our hemisphere by designating Venezuela a state sponsor of terrorism.

Last weekend, our allies in Colombia struck a blow for freedom against the internationally-recognized terrorist organization known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The FARC supports its war against our friends in Colombia through drug trafficking, kidnappings, and the murder of innocent civilians. And, as you are aware, the FARC has expanded their war in Colombia to specifically target the United States by their holding of three Americans as hostages. The attack last weekend which occurred in Ecuador, about a mile from the Colombia-Ecuador border, killed Raul Reyes who was a leader of the FARC terrorist organization.

While Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has been quite vocal in his support of the FARC and his opposition to the United States and Colombia, it is now abundantly clear that Mr. Chavez is increasingly intertwined with the FARC and is now giving aid and comfort to international terrorist organizations. During last week's raid in Ecuador, the Colombian authorities recovered several laptop computers and records belonging to Mr. Reyes. Reports indicate that included in those laptops and papers is evidence that Mr. Chavez has given the FARC hundreds of millions of dollars, weapons, and safe passage and haven in Venezuela.

According to our State Department, "... state sponsors of terrorism provide critical support to non-state terrorist groups. Without state sponsors, terrorist groups would have much more difficulty obtaining the funds, weapons, materials, and secure areas they require to plan and conduct operations." While Venezuela previously has been certified by our Secretary of State as "not fully cooperating" with our counterterrorism efforts, it is increasingly evident that Venezuela now qualifies to be designated as a "state sponsor of terrorism."

Designating a country that repeatedly provides support for international terrorists, like the FARC, imposes certain United States government sanctions such as a ban on arms-related exports and sales and the imposition of economic and financial restrictions. Other countries which have been designated as state sponsors of terrorism and which are good friends of President Chavez include Cuba and Iran.

As you are aware, President Chavez has repeatedly threatened to cut off shipments of oil to the United States. As I have said to you before, we cannot be held as an economic hostage to the whims of tyrants, thugs, and dictators like President Chavez and his anti-American allies such as Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Designating Venezuela and the Chavez regime as a state sponsor of terrorism would likely mean an end to Venezuelan oil until there is regime