



August 24, 2011

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
2367 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Schakowsky:

We are writing to you in light of your service on the House Permanent Select Intelligence Committee to ask that a full investigation be initiated regarding U.S. government assets and assistance that were provided to the Colombian government that may have been used to undermine the interests of workers, labor leaders and union activists, as well as other members of civil society.

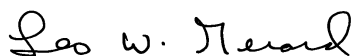
This past weekend, the *Washington Post* ran a story, *U.S. Aid Implicated in Abuses of Power in Colombia*, highlighting how U.S. aid and assistance was diverted from the war on terrorism and drug-smuggling to actions to subvert the interests of justice, workers' rights and civil society. According to the article, the diversion of U.S.-provided resources continued into last year and was well-known by U.S. officials. The Select Committee should aggressively investigate the actions of the U.S. government that aided and abetted the actions of the Colombian government and ascertain the continuing involvement of our officials and the impact of U.S. aid.

As you well know, Colombia has the worst record of any nation when it comes to violence against labor activists. Despite the negotiation of an Action Plan between our two countries that purports to improve labor conditions, threats, actual violence, including the murder of labor leaders and activists, continues. We are among those who believe that Colombia should not be rewarded with the benefits of a free trade agreement unless and until there is a sustained track record of freedom from fear for labor activists, the expansion of workers' rights and bringing to justice those who have perpetrated acts of violence and murder. Indeed, the Action Plan is not even formally part of the implementation of the proposed free trade agreement.

The allegations in the *Washington Post* story bear strict scrutiny not only for the questions about past activities, but with regard to the complicity of U.S. officials and the aid that may have been used against the internationally recognized rights of the Colombian people. Consideration of the pending U.S.-Colombian Free Trade Agreement (FTA) should be put off until there is a clear path towards assuring that Colombian people's interests are protected.

In advance, thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


Leo Gerard
International President
United Steelworkers


Larry Cohen
President
Communication Workers of America