

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations



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Statement by AFL-CIO President John Sweeney On House Leadership Statement on Trade Policy June 29, 2007

We welcome today's clear commitment from Speaker Pelosi and the Democratic leadership to oppose flawed trade agreements with South Korea and Colombia and any renewal of fast track trade negotiating authority until we change our nation's trade policy to promote the interests of working people.

Today's announcement recognizes that we have a great deal of work ahead of us to address the many challenges our nation faces in ensuring that working families – here and abroad – can enjoy their fair share of the benefits of the global economy. If we are to achieve that goal, we will need the full support of our allies in Congress, and we look forward to working with Congress to make the promise of globalization real for our members.

Last month's agreement between House Democrats and the White House was the first step down a long road toward deep reform of U.S. trade policy. The new provisions on workers' rights and the environment represent significant progress in crucial areas that we have fought together to achieve for many years. These issues have been central to the debate over globalization and its impact on working families, both here in the United States and around the world, and we appreciate the deep commitment and hard work of Chairman Charles Rangel and Chairman Sander Levin in achieving this progress.

While we applaud these improvements, Democratic leaders must remain vigilant to ensure the Bush Administration will aggressively and consistently enforce these new provisions.

We hope these important steps will provide a foundation for future efforts to strengthen, improve and effectively enforce protections for workers in the global economy.

With Fast Track expiring tomorrow, and Congress reasserting its constitutional authority over trade, we look forward to addressing some of the other enormous problems facing American workers, businesses, and farmers: ending unfair currency manipulation; addressing unfair and imbalanced asymmetries in the tax code that disadvantage American producers; and strengthening and ensuring adequate enforcement of U.S. trade laws. We must also make the needed investments in infrastructure, education, health care and technology that working people and businesses need to compete successfully in the global economy.