



PRESS RELEASE

OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN ELIOT ENGEL SEVENTEENTH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

2161 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

CONTACT: Eric Jacobstein TEL: (202) 226-9980

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STATEMENT BY CHAIRMAN ELIOT ENGEL URGING PRESIDENT BUSH TO QUICKLY SIGN ANDEAN TRADE PREFERENCE EXTENSION BILL INTO LAW

(Washington, D.C.) – Today, the House of Representatives passed a bill extending the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA) for Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia. The bill, which was passed by the Senate yesterday, now moves to the President for his signature. ATPDEA will be extended for one year for Peru and Colombia, for one year for Ecuador (with a review after 6 months), and for 6 months for Bolivia (with preferences terminating, unless the US President finds Bolivia in compliance with ATPDEA regulations and grants the country an additional 6 month extension).

Rep. Eliot L. Engel (D-NY) – Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere and a major proponent of long-term ATPDEA extension – issued the following statement:

“I am pleased that the House of Representatives has passed legislation extending the Andean trade preferences (ATPDEA) for Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia, and I urge President Bush to quickly sign the bill into law. ATPDEA has been enormously successful, having created hundreds of thousands of jobs for impoverished people in the Andean region, while also supporting essential U.S. geopolitical goals. It has been a much-needed counterpoint to drug production in the Andes. At the same time, every job created through ATPDEA is another potential illegal immigrant remaining in his or her home country.

“Throughout the 110th Congress, I have argued that a long-term extension of ATPDEA is preferable to one short-term extension after another. A long-term extension of ATPDEA would help create a more stable and reliable investment climate, which in turn would generate more jobs in the politically and economically fragile Andes. While I would have preferred a longer term extension of ATPDEA, today’s action is a positive step forward for both the United States and the citizens of the Andean region. Regarding Bolivia, after President Evo Morales expelled US Ambassador Philip Goldberg in September, I said that it was important to review our aid and trade policies. This legislation does just that. It ensures that the people of Bolivia – the poorest country in South America – do not suffer, while also taking a measured approach by allowing ATPDEA to continue and forcing reconsideration of Bolivia’s performance in 6 months.

“I am relieved that Congress was able to consider this crucial legislation in our last hours.”