



Public Comment of

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Andean Subcommittee, Trade Policy Staff Committee (TPSC),
Office of the United States Trade Representative

Review of Bolivia's Designation as a Beneficiary Country under ATPDEA and
ATPA

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As President of the Bolivian-American Chamber of Commerce, and on behalf of our corporate members, I would like to make a few comments in favor of ATPA/ATPDEA extension to Bolivia.

First, a few words about our organization. We were established in 1983 as a private, non-partisan, not-for-profit organization aimed at fostering and promoting trade, commerce and investment between Bolivia and the U.S. Our foundation was based on the fundamental belief that free markets and private enterprise offer the most effective means to achieve economic growth and prosperity. Our programming and advocacy aim to inform, encourage, and promote free and integrated markets for the benefit of the companies that comprise our membership, as well as being unique business tools in a country such as Bolivia, which offers enormous opportunities, with tangible risks. We are strong advocates of free trade, democracy and the rule of law, and work with our members to promote policies that are consistent with that agenda. Our membership represents sectors such as energy, manufacturing, mining, hydrocarbons, technology, tourism, communications, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, legal, banking and financial services. The Chamber's broad-based membership provides it with a well respected, authoritative voice on public policy issues affecting U.S. - Bolivian relations.

As is known, ATPDEA/ATPA has been enormously successful, having created tens of thousands of jobs for Bolivian workers, especially in the El Alto region (outside of La Paz), while also supporting essential U.S. geo-political goals. At the same time, every job created through this trade preference contributes to workers remaining in Bolivia and not attempting to gain illegal entry into the U.S.



As countries like India, Russia and Iran play an increasing role in Bolivia; the U.S. cannot afford to stand back. We need to take advantage of every opportunity to stay engaged in positive and meaningful ways, and we must continue to reach out to the Bolivian population through beneficial aid and trade programs.

We believe that a long-term extension of ATPDEA/ATPA is essential for Bolivia. However, we are also cognizant of recent events in Bolivia – including the expulsion of our U.S. Ambassador and the forced withdrawal of US Drug Enforcement Agency and USAID personnel from the Chapare region of Bolivia.

The President's proposed suspension of Bolivia as an ATPDEA/ATPA beneficiary country would do more harm than good. The suspension would invigorate champions of anti-Americanism, and would make the U.S. less and less relevant in Bolivia. It would leave thousands of people unemployed and provide the perfect opportunity for other countries to fill the void. Suspension of trade preferences would lead to a further corrosion of U.S.-Bolivia relations.

Some argue that a suspension of ATPDEA/ATPA for Bolivia will only hurt the Bolivian economy for a brief time – until the suspension is lifted. However, the reality is different. The jobs that would leave Bolivia – particularly in the textile and some other manufacturing areas – will quickly move to China and other Asian markets. Once these jobs are gone, there will be no incentive to bring them back to Bolivia.

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