



**INTERNATIONAL
BROTHERHOOD
OF ELECTRICAL
WORKERS®**

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EDWIN D. HILL
International President

SAM J. CHILIA
International
Secretary-Treasurer

July 13, 2011

Dear Senator or Representative:

On behalf of the approximately 725,000 members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), I write to express my strong opposition to the proposed trade agreements with South Korea, Columbia, and Panama. All three are North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)-style pacts originally negotiated by President Bush. I urge you to vote no when they are considered by Congress.

As I stated in a letter I sent you in December, 2010 regarding the South Korea agreement: “It is long past due that common sense be applied to the issue of international trade. For the better part of two decades Americans have been told that free trade is good for workers and consumers. In reality, trade policies promulgated by both Democratic and Republican administrations have benefited multi-national corporations and their top executives. Although these policies have allowed consumers access to cheap (though sometimes toxic) products, they have come at a tremendous cost in the form of lost jobs, a shrunken tax base, diminished access to health care, and a reduced quality of life.” Now, in addition to the South Korea agreement, the Columbia and Panama pacts will perpetuate the same job-killing provisions that gained their greatest traction in NAFTA.

The problems with these agreements are well-documented. Adoption of the South Korea agreement will lead to the loss of approximately 159,000 jobs and expand our trade deficit with this country by \$16.7 billion during the first seven years of implementation. Additionally, South Korea is a proven currency manipulator having been declared so by the U.S. Treasury in 1988 and again in 1999. Unfortunately, the South Korea agreement does nothing to address currency manipulation.

Like South Korea, the Columbia agreement is another NAFTA-style pact, but in Columbia more is being lost than jobs. Columbia is the most dangerous place in the world for trade unionists. In 2010, 51 labor leaders were killed in Columbia, an increase over 2009. This is more than in the rest of the world combined. The government of Columbia has been unable to effectively guarantee the rule of law to allow workers to exercise their legal rights.

The last of the nations being considered for a NAFTA-style agreement, Panama, is a known “tax haven” with a history of attracting money launders and tax dodgers. Although the Tax Information Exchange Treaty that Panama recently signed looks to combat these issues, it does not go into effect for another year and



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may be too weak to fix the problems. Additionally, Panama has a history of failing to protect workers and enforce labor rights.

“Free trade” has proven to be a job-killer in the good-paying manufacturing sector. Lay-offs, closed factories, and lost tax base have been the legacy of NAFTA, CAFTA, and their associated trade agreements. This is why I urge you to vote no on the South Korea, Colombia, and Panama free trade agreements when they are brought to a vote in Congress.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edwin D. Hill".

Edwin D. Hill
International President

EDH:lgd
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