



NEWS

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Sen. Daschle Blocks Free Trade Bill; Taxpayers and Consumers in Uproar

Democrat Senate Majority Leader halts vote on Andean trade bill on eve of President Bush's visit to Peru.

WASHINGTON — Today, Senate Majority Leader Thomas Daschle (D-S.D.) said he would block Sen. Trent Lott's (R-Miss.) effort to advance free trade legislation, S-525, on the eve of President George W. Bush's trip to Peru.

Free trade remains the dominant issue in America's hemispheric relations, and Daschle's obstructionism promises to thwart what could be a great step forward between the United States and Peru. Peru normalized its democracy after a decade of quasi-dictatorship under former President Alberto Fujimori, who now lives in disgraced exile in Japan.

"Tom Daschle's obstructionism on every issue at every opportunity has got to end," said taxpayer advocate Grover Norquist, who heads Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) in Washington. **"At some point, a man's personal ambitions must give way to the public interest, and that public interest is free trade and improved hemispheric relations with our Latino neighbors."**

Meanwhile, Daschle has yet to schedule a vote on the Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) legislation, formerly called "fast track," which passed in the House last fall. TPA gives the president the power to negotiate trade treaties with other nations, the results of which come back to Congress for an up/down vote. President Bush made increased trade with Latin America a major foreign policy initiative in his campaign and in the first year of his presidency, but unions and extreme environmental groups have worked to stonewall the legislation at every turn.

"America was founded on trade, and we grew strong by constantly opening foreign markets to our goods and services. Those members of Congress who oppose free trade and the bill to open trade to the Andean nations, have pessimistically decided that American enterprise cannot compete with foreign businesses. Tom Daschle's relentless obstructionism of the president's initiatives at every single turn must end, lest he seeks a legacy of nothing fault his unhindered ambition for power," concluded Norquist.

Americans for Tax Reform is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who support tax simplification and oppose all federal and state tax increases. For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Jonathan Collegio at (202) 785-0266 or by email at jcollegio@atr.org