

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 20, 2009

The Honorable Carolina Barco Isakson
Ambassador of Colombia to the United States
2118 Leroy Place NW
Washington, DC 20008

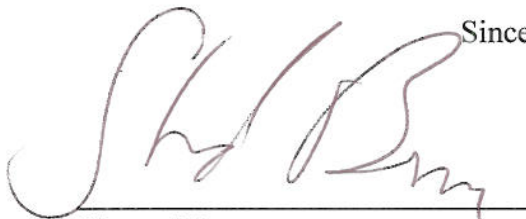
Dear Ambassador Barco:

On February 12, 2009, Congressman George Miller, Chairman of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor, held a public hearing on the state of workers' rights in the Republic of Colombia. Four human rights advocates – three of whom were from Colombia – shared their views on labor rights in the country, based on extensive, first-hand experience and careful analysis of the current situation.

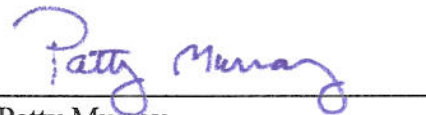
Subsequent to the hearing, we were informed these witnesses received threats and other signals of violence. In addition, we understand that President Alvaro Uribe Velez made comments on February 14 that the human rights advocates who testified before the Committee are liars and motivated by "political hatred." We are very concerned about the safety of these witnesses and that President Uribe's comments could be construed as tolerating intimidation and violence against human rights advocates.

We urge an immediate clarification of these comments that affirms the rights of persons in a free society to express their opinions as a democratic republic professes to do. We also are concerned about the effect President Uribe's initial comments may have on the safety of those who voluntarily testified before the Committee on Education and Labor. Thus, we ask that the Columbian government take all measures necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of those who testified and their families.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator