

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Jake Sullivan [redacted]
Sent: Saturday, April 18, 2009 8:05 PM
To: H
Subject: Congressional meeting

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Below are the highlights from the congressional meeting. Please let me know if you need more.

Engel focused on the double-edged sword of high expectations – they reflect a positive reception but also point up a need to deliver.

Baucus made three points:

(1) Go further on Cuba

(2) Pass the Panama and Colombia FTAs (on Panama, he said that it would be hard to get the tax information exchange agreement resolved on the right timeline; on Colombia, he said that it might not be prudent to give them a list of proposed fixes – we needed to sort out the ILO standards)

(3) Find a way to cut through the bureaucracy – you’ve teed things up well but cutting red tape is the way actually to get those things accomplished.

Rangel focused heavily on the Colombia and Panama FTAs, saying that the President had to lend his star power to pushing them through. (Engel jumped in to say organized labor poses a significant obstacle; in 20 years he hasn’t seen them so dug in.)

Mack offered general observations about the administration’s renewed focus on the hemisphere and the positive early effects of its engagement. He had a veiled criticism of the Bush administration’s approach to Chavez – he was “frustrated with the previous administration because they wouldn’t even mention people’s names.” (He wants you to go out and take swings at Chavez.)

Farr gave effusive praise to the Summit Declaration, saying that it represented an action plan or blueprint for the sorts of development objectives he has long championed. (He referenced President Clinton’s emphasis on having more than programs – having plans.) He echoed Baucus’ sentiment about red tape, noting that as Secretary of State you own the implementation of all these plans through the 150 account and lamenting the amount of time it takes to transfer even small amounts of appropriated funds for important programs (he gave a Colombia technical assistance example). He closed by giving passionate remarks about how proud he is of the new mindset the administration is bringing to bear on issues in the hemisphere.

Becerra made three points:

- (1) Latin America is looking for real change, and they see the new administration as a real opportunity for it – they are eager to embrace the President and you.
- (2) We need immigration reform badly – and you are the best voice for it, because your approach is not just tough and smart but also compassionate.
- (3) We need to harness the power of remittances in a more effective way. Remittances, in his view, are better than aid, but they have to be directed in a concerted and systematic way. He offered the example of Mexico as a place that has a matching and pooling program so that remittances go for communal benefit.

Meeks discussed the FTAs and focused on the fact that there is capacity building money built into them – money to help strengthen Panama’s and Colombia’s economies from the bottom up, but there is no mechanism in place to deploy those funds. He urges you to figure out a mechanism. He also explained that he thought USAID is broken, with the example that our approach to microfinancing has actually gotten worse and less effective over time. He also underscored the red tape issue.

Velazquez focused on Cuba. She said that Latin Americans are looking for respect and view Cuba as an important test of whether we are moving away from what they perceived to be American arrogance. She said it makes no sense for us to consider talking to the Taliban and to talk to Vietnam and China and others when we won’t talk to an island 90 miles off our coast that poses no strategic threat.

Mary Bono said that you should place a heavy emphasis on the drug issue and find 21st century solutions.

Sandy Levin spoke at the end and gave some measured, equivocal comments about the Colombia FTA. He said that we may see more bipartisanship on this issue despite, or because of, the large Democratic majority.