



**Leo W. Gerard**  
International President

May 5, 2008

VIA FAX

Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madame Speaker and Leader Reid:

On behalf of the 850,000 active members of the United Steelworkers, I write to urge you to oppose the proposed \$500 million in security assistance to Mexico – the “Merida Initiative” – included in the Administration’s fiscal year 2008 supplemental funding request, as well as included in the additional funding request for fiscal year 2009.

While the USW agrees that combating drug trafficking throughout the hemisphere is a legitimate foreign policy goal, the strategy proposed by the Administration would do little to control such threat and risks undermining our nation’s commitment to safeguard human rights and labor rights in Mexico. As leading human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have made known, Mexican security forces have committed many human rights violations while engaged in law enforcement activities. Because of the widespread corruption and institutional weaknesses, the parties for these abuses are rarely punished. The U.S. Department of State’s 2006 Human Rights Report highlighted a “deeply entrenched culture of impunity and corruption”, which has continued unabated in the Calderon administration. Independent labor unions have been a particular target of government repression.

Despite these facts, the Administration is asking Congress to give the Mexican government a blank check for \$500 million, with no conditions or restrictions. Without substantial and concrete improvements in the institutional mechanisms to weed out criminals, provide necessary training in human rights and establish effective civilian oversight, additional funding to these security forces likely would worsen corruption and violent abuses. The USW is concerned over Mexico’s systematic and often violent repression of core labor rights in violation of its obligations under the International Labor Organization. One especially egregious example:

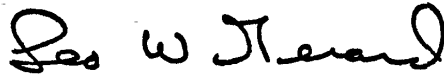
- The Calderon administration and the mining company Grupo Mexico have launched a full-scale attack on the National Union of Mine and Metal Workers and its General Secretary, Napoleon Gomez Urrutia. Such attacks include the arbitrary withdrawal of legal recognition from Gomez and other duly elected union leaders and the filing of baseless criminal charges. Three members of the union have been murdered by security forces with no one being brought to justice. Moreover, there has not been an adequate investigation or

follow-up with regard to the responsibility of Grupo Mexico officials for the deaths of 65 miners in the Pasta de Conchos mine in February 2006.

The USW seriously doubts that increasing funding for military and police forces is the best means of achieving enhanced security given Mexico's use of violence as a tool for repressing human rights, labor rights and civil society. The most destabilizing forces in Mexico today are poverty, low wages and the lack of decent work opportunities. These are the causes of crime and the forces pushing half a million Mexicans to migrate to the United States every year. Instead of militarizing the problems by increased military assistance, a serious approach to regional security would focus on the creation of decent work at decent wages.

Any funding under the Merida Initiative, at a minimum, must establish a strong program for human rights certification based on making progress in resolving key cases such as that of Napoleon Gomez Urrutia before funds are released. Absent such certification, the USW asks you to oppose the Administration's funding request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leo W. Gerard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Leo" being the most prominent.

Leo W. Gerard  
International President

LWG/ctl

c: Honorable Robert C. Byrd, Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Honorable David Obey, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations