

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SJM 8043

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Brief Description: Requesting the elimination of preferences given to asparagus under the Andean Trade Preference Act.

Sponsors: Senators Rasmussen, Brown, Shin and Spanel.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/24/04, 2/25/04 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requests the Congress to eliminate the preference given to asparagus imports under the Andean Trade Preference Act.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Linville, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Holmquist, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kristiansen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Eickmeyer, Grant, Hunt, McDermott, Orcutt, Quall and Sump.

Staff: Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).

Background:

According to a report of the Office of the United States Trade Representative, the Andean Trade Preference Act (Act) is designed to assist Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru in fighting drug production and trafficking. It is to do so by expanding the economic alternatives available within those countries by providing a reduction in duty or duty-free importation of most of their exports to the United States. Under the Act, U. S. imports from Peru actually declined from 2001 to 2002 to a total of \$382 million. However, U.S. imports of fresh asparagus from Peru went against this trend during the same period, increasing by 20 percent to \$50 million in 2002 and have continued to increase.

Summary of Bill:

The Congress is requested to eliminate immediately the preference given to asparagus and asparagus products under the Andean Trade Preference Act and to refuse to extend any further protection to Andean asparagus producers when the Act expires.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: 1) This is a fair trade issue. The Act was originally designed to reduce the amount of cocaine grown in those countries, but the cocaine is still produced and the U.S. must now accept the asparagus imports. 2) There has been approximately a 2000 percent increase in the importation of asparagus from Peru. Unlike imports from other countries and states that take place at times when fresh Washington product is not available, the imports from Peru take place year-round. They have had a huge impact on the asparagus industry in this state; Congressional action is needed to keep the industry from dying out.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Rasmussen, prime sponsor; and Charlie Brown, Washington Asparagus Council.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.