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**SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 8043**

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**State of Washington                      58th Legislature                      2004 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Rasmussen, Brown, Shin and Spanel

Read first time 01/26/2004. Referred to Committee on Agriculture.

1            TO THE HONORABLE GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,  
2            AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF  
3            REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
4            UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, AND TO THE HONORABLE ELAINE L.  
5            CHAO, SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR:

6            We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of  
7            the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled, respectfully  
8            represent and petition as follows:

9            WHEREAS, Washington's economic prospects are heavily dependent upon  
10           the success of interstate and international trade; and

11           WHEREAS, The vitality of the asparagus industry is a crucial  
12           component of the economic health of the State of Washington, as  
13           Washington is historically the nation's second largest producer of  
14           asparagus; and

15           WHEREAS, In order to provide an agricultural alternative to the  
16           production of cocaine in South American countries, the United States  
17           Congress enacted the "Andean Trade Preference Act," exempting certain  
18           agricultural products from the imposition of tariffs; and

19           WHEREAS, South American asparagus is one of the agricultural

1 products exempted from tariffs, and the exemption has created an  
2 asparagus industry in Peru with 130 million dollars in annual exports,  
3 primarily to the United States; and

4 WHEREAS, Due to differing climatic zones in Peru, the rapid  
5 expansion of year-round asparagus production has not significantly  
6 affected the production of cocaine; and

7 WHEREAS, Unlike other international agreements, there is no  
8 mechanism in the Andean Trade Preference Act for removing the trade  
9 exemption once a foreign industry becomes internationally competitive;  
10 and

11 WHEREAS, The asparagus industry in Washington is seasonal, with  
12 harvesting occurring from April through June, in contrast to Peru's  
13 year-round production capacity; and

14 WHEREAS, The International Trade Commission, an independent,  
15 nonpartisan federal fact-finding agency, concluded in October 2003 that  
16 among all the agricultural products protected under the Andean Trade  
17 Preference Act, the agricultural industry was the only United States  
18 industry currently being displaced by South American agricultural  
19 products; and

20 WHEREAS, Andean asparagus producers benefit from both the absence  
21 of any tariff imposed on their crops and extremely low wages paid to  
22 their employees, often as low as 5 dollars per day; and

23 WHEREAS, The asparagus industry in Washington is threatened and has  
24 been harmed by the importation of such foreign produce, primarily from  
25 Peru, resulting in the decision by two Washington asparagus processors  
26 to cease buying Washington asparagus; and

27 WHEREAS, Although the goal of the Andean Trade Preference Act is  
28 worthwhile, it should not be imposed at the complete expense of the  
29 northwest asparagus industry, a vital sector of Washington's economy;

30 NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully pray that Congress  
31 immediately eliminate the preference given to asparagus and asparagus  
32 products under the Andean Trade Preference Act and refuse to extend any  
33 further protection to Andean asparagus producers upon expiration of the  
34 Act.

35 BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately  
36 transmitted to the Honorable George W. Bush, President of the United  
37 States, the honorable Elaine L. Chao, Secretary of the Department of

1 Labor, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the  
2 House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from the State of  
3 Washington.

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