

Press Release

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Hundreds of Organizations Unite to Support a New Day in Trade Policy
Over 345 Faith, Farm, Environmental & Labor Groups Pledge to Back Promises of Reform

Washington D.C. – In a letter sent to members of Congress yesterday, 347 national, state and local organizations from across the country, representing over eighteen million combined members, vowed to support promises of change made by scores of successful candidates during the 2008 election, and to help “replace the failed trade policies of the past with those that deliver broadly shared benefits.”

The [letter](#), sent by a diverse coalition of faith, family farm, environmental, labor, and consumer groups, promised help push reform, pledging “As the new Congress begins, we look forward to working with you and the Obama Administration to seize this opportunity to create better rules for trade policy.”

“Free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and Korea represent more-of-the-same failed model backed by the Bush Administration, and strongly rejected by voters,” said Andy Gussert, CTC coalition director. “Hundreds of groups are now organizing, rolling up their sleeves, and pushing for reform, including support for *Buy American* provisions in the stimulus package.”

At this time, not one environmental, faith or labor organization in America endorses passage of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement in its current form, but many are pushing to construct trade agreements that can gain a majority of congressional support.

Trade reform dominated Congressional races across the country in 2008, with more than one hundred different paid campaign ads focusing on problems with NAFTA, CAFTA, offshoring and unsafe imports. A record [one hundred and five distinct campaign ads](#) were produced by Congressional, Senate and Presidential campaigns.

In 2008, 42 newly elected Freshman Senators and Representatives ran on reforming the U.S. trade model. They joined over two dozen fair traders first elected in 2006, making a combined total of 71 reformers replacing those who previously supporting the status quo system based on the failed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

“Candidates ran hard on trade reform, and they won. Voters sent a clear message - we support change,” added Gussert. “We want to let these newly elected trade champions know we support their campaign message, and are here to help keep those promises.”

In 2008 campaign spots, candidates supported “made-in-America tax break to keep jobs right here,” and highlighted how opponents “voted for tax giveaways to companies that move jobs overseas.” Many promised to “oppose job killing trade deals like NAFTA and CAFTA, which cost our state jobs.” Some challengers reminded voters that the opponent “cast the deciding vote on CAFTA” and “sided with George Bush on trade policies to move our jobs overseas.”

Barack Obama posted more than a dozen separate ads on trade reform, including specific spots about mills shutting down as we offshore jobs, and another on McCain purchasing foreign made automobiles. Obama also rolled out radio spots criticizing McCain for the procurement position on switching to foreign made motorcycles, rather than using Harley-Davidson to supply the U.S. Secret Service. In June, John McCain ran a pro-free-trade ad in Florida, supporting passage of the stalled Colombia Trade Agreement.

Nearly three-quarters of Americans believe that a “free trade agreement” has had a negative effect on their families. GOP voters, by a two-to-one majority, agree that foreign trade has been bad for the U.S. economy, because imports from abroad have reduced demand for American-made goods, cost jobs here at home, and produced potentially unsafe products. Majorities oppose NAFTA across every demographic, making reform the predominate view of voters across the country.

Several 2008 Senate races, including Jeff Merkley in Oregon and Kay Hagen in North Carolina, also made trade a centerpiece of their campaign messages. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee ran seven trade ads across five states with top races. In 2006, nine Senate challengers beat incumbents while running on fair trade reform policies. All nine of those Senators then went on to vote against the next free trade agreement put before the Senate, in December of 2007.

To see the letter supporting a new day in trade, visit our website at www.citizenstrade.org

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Citizens Trade Campaign is a coalition of labor, environmental, religious, family farm, civil society and consumer organizations united in the pursuit of social and environmental justice in trade policy.

Formed in 1992 to reform NAFTA, our more than fourteen million combined members support trade policy that reflects the interests of a majority of people in America, and across the world.