

Citizens Trade Campaign

working **together** for **social** and **environmental justice** in trade policy

For Immediate Release
Wednesday, August 20th, 2008

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National Democratic Party Picks Sides for First Time on Trade Debate ***Faith, Farm, Labor & Environmental Groups Applaud Groundbreaking Fair Trade Language in Platform***

Washington D.C. – After more than a decade of division within the Democratic Party on the issue of free trade, the National Committee codified a clear vision of reform in the platform document going to their Denver Convention next week. “This language is nothing less than groundbreaking,” said Andy Gussert, National Director of Citizens Trade Campaign. “For the first time, the DNC has publically and formally stated they back a policy to change global trade rules, amend NAFTA, and reform organizations like the G8 and World Trade Organization.” The final 2008 platform draft included more than 3000 words across 24 separate pages addressing trade and globalization issues.

NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, was first introduced by Democrat Bill Clinton in 1993. Since then, many top party leaders have continued to embrace the status quo free trade model as an acceptable position. “This platform gives a clear indication, for the first time, where the Democratic Party is on fair trade,” added Gussert. “They want more of it.”

“It’s important to see a movement away from failed trade models of the past”, said Mark Levinson, Chief Economist of the labor union UNITE HERE! “The Obama Agenda describes trade as a positive international tool for bringing about enforceable labor and environmental standards, human rights, poverty alleviation and climate control. This is a major step forward.”

Environmentalists were also proud of the platform’s major focus on climate control and renewable energy. “We commend the many promises to include environmental standards in trade agreements, and to seek binding and enforceable commitments on reducing emissions to control the climate,” added Brent Blackwelder, President of Friends of the Earth. “We also respect their bold investment in our U.S. renewable energy infrastructure, to create environmental jobs that won’t be outsourced.”

Important safety issues, such as toxic toys and food protection, were also covered within the platform. “They’ve addressed serious problems with serious commitments”, stated Holly Hart of the Steelworkers, acknowledging the platform’s commitment that consumer products coming in from other countries must be truly safe. “They covered several tough issues, including a needed rollback of foreign investor rights.”

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

The platform states no future bilateral trade agreements “*will stop the government from protecting the environment, food safety, or the health of its citizens; give greater rights to foreign investors than to U.S. investors; require the privatization of our vital public services; or prevent developing country governments from adopting humanitarian licensing policies to improve access to life-saving medications.*” The Platform also adds that trade deals “*must not come as blank checks,*” and American support will only be “*coupled with an insistent call for reform*”.

“They’ve hit on several of the most egregious unfair trade practices—including currency manipulation, lax consumer standards and violations of environmental standards,” added Tom Buis, President of the National Farmers Union. “More importantly, they’ve promised to stand firm against future agreements that fail to live up to these benchmarks. This will allow American farmers to better compete on a more level playing field.”

Faith groups were pleased with the commitment to cut poverty in half over the next eight years. “This Platform outlines a vision of trade that will serve the needs of the many instead of the few,” said Mark Harrison of the United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society. “We applaud the strong focus on using trade to alleviate poverty and increase human rights across the world.”

No past state or federal platform, from either party, has covered the trade issue so in depth. “In the past, we were lucky to get half a loaf,” added Gussert. “It’s nice when you can get nine out of ten slices.”

Specific Trade Excerpts from the 2008 DNC Platform can be found at:

<http://www.citizenstrade.org/platform.php>

A current version of the 2008 DNC Platform draft is located at:

http://www.citizenstrade.org/pdf/2008DemocraticPlatformbyCmte_08-13-08.pdf

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Citizens Trade Campaign (CTC) is a non-partisan national coalition of environmental, family farm, faith, and labor groups working for trade policy that reflects the interests of the majority of people in the U.S. and across the world. CTC is also pushing the RNC Platform Committee to adopt new trade language. For more information about this and other issues, call or email National Director Andy Gussert at agussert@citizenstrade.org

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