

Press Release

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Contact: Andy Gussert, Director
Phone: (202) 494-8826
Email: agussert@citizenstrade.org

Trade Reform Message Dominates Last Minute Campaign Ads

Candidates Run Record Number of Paid Ads on Safe Imports, Outsourcing, CAFTA and Trade Issues

Washington D.C. – A message of trade reform is dominating congressional races across the country in 2008, as candidates are running more than one hundred different paid campaign ads focusing on problems with NAFTA, CAFTA, offshoring and unsafe imports. With scant television time left to purchase, congressional candidates across the country are buying up remaining airtime to post last-minute ads on trade reform. A record [one hundred and five distinct campaign ads](#) have been produced by Congressional, Senate and Presidential campaigns.

“This is shaping up to be a repeat of last cycle,” said Andy Gussert, National Director of Citizens Trade Campaign. “Candidates who ran on trade reform won, and those who embraced the failed policies of the past lost.” In 2006, thirty-seven fair traders beat anti-fair trade incumbents, or took their open seats, in House and Senate races, in races from Hawaii to New Hampshire,

In more than one hundred trade spots this cycle, candidates promise to “oppose job killing trade deals like NAFTA and CAFTA, which cost our state jobs.” Many challengers are reminding voters that the opponent “cast the deciding vote on CAFTA” and “sides with George Bush on trade policies to move our jobs overseas.” Several candidates are supporting a “made-in-America tax break to keep jobs right here,” and highlighting how an opponent “voted for tax giveaways to companies that move jobs overseas.”

“Candidates nationwide are clearly responding to widespread popular discontent regarding our failed trade policies,” said Gussert. “For years, polling data has shown that NAFTA-style trade policies are opposed by a majority of voters across all demographics. This is especially true in battleground states, and among the swing voters that will determine the election outcomes.”

The fair-trade message is also resonating in the presidential race. Barack Obama has already 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-Davidsons for 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.

Approximately half of the current trade ads are from Congressional challengers, who are hoping to repeat the results of last cycle. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which was accused last cycle of insufficiently prioritizing a fair-trade message and thus missing several key opportunities to pick up seats, appears to have overcome any reluctance to embrace this issue. This cycle, the DCCC has produced and

posted at least a dozen different ads promoting fair trade policies and attacking anti- fair trade incumbents. In November of 2007, a majority of Congressional Democrats voted against the Peru Free Trade Agreement, which only passed with the substantial help of Republicans.

Several top Senate races, including Jeff Merkley in Oregon and Kay Hagen in North Carolina, have made trade reform a centerpiece of their campaign message. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee is running 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.

“Voters are looking to candidates to address their concerns about flawed NAFTA-style trade policy,” said Gussert. “There’s not much time left, but there’s still a window for candidates to run on trade reform, and many are using the opportunity to do so.”

For more information about the role that trade is playing in this elections, and to see the ads discussed here, please visit our website: www.citizenstrade.org/elections2008.php

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PO Box 77077 Washington, DC 20013 phone: 202-778-3321 fax: 202-293-5308 www.citizenstrade.org

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 twelve million combined members support trade policy that reflects the interests of a majority of people in America, and across the world.