



Washington Fair Trade Coalition

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Working on behalf of people and the planet for a fair global trading system

Congressional Leaders Launch Bold New Trade Reform Act

The Washington Fair Trade Coalition Urges Washington State Members of Congress to Co-sponsor Legislation

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Seattle -- Over fifty original House and Senate cosponsors joined twenty leading labor, environmental, family farm and faith groups in supporting new consensus legislation offering a positive vision for future U.S. trade policy. Entitled the *Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment (TRADE) Act* (H.R. 6180), the bill was introduced by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Rep. Mike Michaud (D-Maine) on June 4th, 2008 in Washington D.C. None of Washington State's members of Congress were original co-sponsors.

The act triggers a review of all existing trade agreements, and provides a process to renegotiate them. The bill also outlines principles of what should be included in future trade agreements, and expresses the sense of the Congress that their role in trade policymaking should be strengthened.

Rick Bender, President of the Washington State Labor Council, supports the TRADE Act. "It is time we get some teeth in our trade agreements and require real protections for both workers and the environment," said Bender. "We must no longer treat these vital concerns as a sidebar to broader economic interests. Securing the future of workers and the health of the planet will benefit everyone – business and labor included."

No member of the Washington State Congressional delegation was an original co-sponsor of the bill. However, many local organizations are already praising it as a bold step forward on trade policy, and are encouraging state officials to sign on.

"This bill is ground-breaking. It is an opportunity to restore balance in our trade agenda, between business and investor interests on one hand, and the interests of communities and the public on the other hand," comments Cynthia Cole, President of SPEEA, the union of Boeing engineers and technical workers. "Hopefully, Congress members from Washington State will be quick to support a new model for trade that will benefit working people as well as businesses in our state."

Environmental groups see this bill as important for ensuring trade and environmental concerns are complementary. Kathleen Ridihalgh of Sierra Club Northwest/Alaska Region says: "This Act has the potential to set straight the history of NAFTA and the WTO to encourage truly sustainable development that promises to benefit the majority of

the world's people, whether farmers or business owners, while protecting our resources for future generations."

Kristen Kosidowski of Witness for Peace Northwest sees this bill as an opportunity to be in favor of trade policy, since many social justice groups often find themselves opposed to trade agreements. "The TRADE Act is exactly the step that we need to take. Over and over we've had to say "No!" to trade policies that set up our local working communities and our global neighbors for failure, but the TRADE Act gives us hope for a trade model that we can support - one that is *of* the people and *for* the people."

The TRADE Act was introduced following a presidential primary season that saw trade policy rise to the top of American's concerns. With several Democratic candidates promising to renegotiate existing agreements (visit www.citizenstrade.org/positions.php for those commitments), the TRADE Act provides a blueprint for how to best remedy many of these past problems in trade agreements.

The current U.S. trade model has had devastating impacts. Since 1975, when Fast Track (Trade Promotion Authority) was first enacted, the trade deficit has gone from a slight surplus to an unsustainable \$709 billion deficit in 2007. A net 4.7 million manufacturing jobs have been lost. In Washington State almost 14,000 workers have applied for Trade Adjustment Assistance, which indicates that our current trade model caused them to suffer job loss or reduced income. This represents only a fraction of the total number of those whose jobs or livelihoods have been negatively impacted by the NAFTA-style trade model, including thousands of Mexican farmers who have immigrated to Washington State in search of a livelihood after the collapse of the Mexican rural economy.

According to Stephanie Celt, Director of the Washington Fair Trade Coalition, "More and more Americans are realizing that our current trade model hurts more people than it helps. I hope that Congress members from Washington State will act on this important opportunity to support a truly fair trade bill that will benefit our state as well as the world at large."

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