

Congressional Leaders Launch Bold Trade Reform Act
Citizen Demand for Change Fuels Groundbreaking Legislation

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - 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*, the bill was introduced by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Rep. Mike Michaud (D-Maine) today in Washington D.C.

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.

“The TRADE Act’s clear articulation of what we’re for, and its very specific benchmarks for current and future trade agreements provides a balanced way forward that grounds our trade policy on the impact these policies have on American’s everyday lives,” said Rep. Michaud. “Instead of rhetoric, the TRADE Act calls for concrete results.”

“This bill breaks new ground on the enforcement of labor rights, environmental protection, food and product safety, procurement, safeguards against surges of imports, trade remedies against unfair trade practices and the ability for countries to regulate foreign investment,” said Bruce Raynor, President of UNITE HERE.

Brent Blackwelder, President of Friends of the Earth, added accolades, noting “Trade agreements should support, rather than undermine, environmental protection. The TRADE Act encourages responsible behavior, providing a blueprint for a far better and more balanced way to conduct international trade.”

Larry Cohen, President of the Communication Workers of America, also praised the initiative, saying, "The TRADE Act restores Congress's constitutional right of oversight in trade policy. The Bush Administration has trampled on that right. The landmark legislation that is being introduced today will ensure that no matter who occupies the Oval Office, Congress will have a meaningful say in trade policy."

Teamsters General President James Hoffa added his organization’s support, saying, "The TRADE Act would make sure that the benefits of trade go to workers as well as the richest few. It sets new rules for global trade that create good jobs and improve working conditions everywhere.”

The TRADE Act was introduced following a primary season that saw trade policy rise to the top of American's concerns. With several Democratic presidential 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 trade problems.

“Current trade agreements have consistently failed to live up to their promised benefits, encouraging a race to see who can produce the cheapest food and fiber regardless of production standards,” NFU President Tom Buis said. “The TRADE Act defines a plan for a fair trade policy that will allow American agriculture to compete on a level playing field.”

According to Andrew Gussert, CTC National Director, “Not one environmental, labor, family farm or religious group in the country supports current pacts like the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, but progressive organizations want to see a responsible expansion of trade. This legislation is a balanced way to expand trade, offering us all a fair way forward. It means future trade agreements can better serve a majority of people on issues such as jobs, the environment, human rights and public health.”

The current U.S. trade model has had devastating impacts. Since 1975, when Fast Track 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. American worker productivity doubled but median wages are only 1 percent above 1970s levels.

The bill articulates specific changes needed to the failed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)/World Trade Organization (WTO) model to ensure trade deals achieve good jobs, safe food and the promotion of basic human rights, healthy communities and environmental protection.

Some of the organizations supporting the TRADE Act include:

AFL-CIO, Change to Win, Citizens Trade Campaign, National Farmers Union, Friends of the Earth, United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Sierra Club, United Steelworkers, Americans for Democratic Action, Communications Workers of America, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, National Family Farm Coalition, International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, UNITE HERE, IATP Action, and the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades.

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