

## **A Statement of Concern: The Churches' Response to Free Trade Agreements**

1 WHEREAS, we are called by Christ to love all of God's children, wherever they may live  
2 around the world, and to “love one another as I have loved you” and

3 WHEREAS, God has called us to be good stewards of what has been given to us, and to  
4 share what we have with the “least of these” and

5 WHEREAS we are called in communion to God's banquet table, to share with all our  
6 brothers and sisters, to share in the bread and the cup, and

7 WHEREAS the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), Central American  
8 Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), and the General Agreement on Trade in Services  
9 (GATS) are three examples of a growing number of international economic agreements  
10 that are affecting or will affect our community and

11 WHEREAS the negotiations surrounding these trade agreements have been held secretly,  
12 without allowing for any effective public evaluation or input and

13 WHEREAS The North American Free Trade Agreement's (NAFTA's) Chapter 11  
14 Investor to State Lawsuits, which will be included and strengthened in the FTAA and  
15 CAFTA, directly threaten the sovereignty of local, state and national governments and

16 WHEREAS Investor to State lawsuits and services rules proposed in the FTAA, CAFTA  
17 and GATS threaten local environmental, labor, public health and consumer protection  
18 laws and

19 WHEREAS services rules currently proposed for these international agreements could  
20 force local, state and national governments to privatize public services like water,  
21 education, healthcare, social services, prisons, etc., leading to lack of local control and  
22 accountability and

23 WHEREAS these international agreements would eliminate thousands of manufacturing  
24 and service jobs and force communities to compete in a global “race to the bottom” and

25 WHEREAS the effect of these international agreements would be to shift power away  
26 from communities and small businesses and toward large multinational corporations

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27 NOW, THEREFORE, WE CALL ON THE PEOPLE OF THE AMERICAN BAPTIST  
28 CHURCHES OF MASSACHUSETTS TO:

29 1) Urge the President and members of Congress to oppose the FTAA, CAFTA, and  
30 GATS, and any other international agreements that:

31 a) include “regulatory expropriation” or “investor-to-state dispute resolution”  
32 clauses like the NAFTA Chapter 11 provisions that corporations have used to  
33 challenge legitimate government actions or

34 b) would lead to significant losses of family-supporting jobs, and their  
35 replacement with low-paying, no-benefit, non-union jobs or

36 c) do not protect workers’ right to organize or

37 d) could be used to force privatization of vital public services like education,  
38 healthcare, and water or

39 e) give more rights to major corporations while limiting the ability of local  
40 communities to pursue goals like environmental protection, public health, and  
41 economic development or

42 f) are negotiated in secret; and

43 2) Educate themselves about CAFTA, GATS, and FTAA and join the campaign to  
44 oppose any such international agreements and

45 3) Work with others in our communities also concerned about justice and fairness for  
46 all in our country and around the world and

47 4) Encourage all people to purchase fair trade products and

48 5) Pray that we will hear and follow God's call as we search for justice for all peoples  
49 around the world and

50 6) Send copies of this statement of concern to the President and to our federal and state  
51 legislators.