



## Citizens Trade Digest, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005

*Welcome to our bi-weekly digest that we hope will educate and agitate people on current trade issues that affect our daily lives and the world we live in. These digests include action alerts, important news articles, local trade-related event information, resources, and other useful tools to change U.S. trade policy and promote economic justice, human rights, and protect our environment.*

Check out more resources and updates on our website at <http://www.citizenstrade.org/>.

### **This Digest Contains:**

- 1) CAFTA Update: Honduras and Guatemala ratify despite widespread opposition
- 2) Central Americans Speak Out against CAFTA: Major Issues and Mobilizations
- 3) Americans Polled on CAFTA
- 4) U.S Pressures Guatemala Regarding Data Exclusivity, CAFTA and Access to Medicines
- 5) The Impact of Trade Liberalization on Women's Human Rights in the U.S.
- 6) Take Part in the Global Week of ACTION

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### **1) CAFTA Update:**

Senate Finance Committee Chair Charles Grassley (R-IA) announced that his committee will hold hearings on CAFTA on April 6. This hearing is the first official step toward having CAFTA introduced into Congress (though the hearing does not start the Fast Track clock ticking), and a signal of the Bush administration's increasing focus on CAFTA. The announcement came as the U.S Chamber of Commerce sponsored a tour of Central American ambassadors to many U.S. cities to promote the deal.

Meanwhile, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) voted to oppose CAFTA – a surprising and significant blow to the claim that the agricultural community supports the free trade agenda. And at least six state Farm Bureaus have come out in opposition to CAFTA. These include Florida, Louisiana, and Colorado, while others are still going through the logistic steps to make their dissent official. Once a state Farm Bureau formally takes such a position, the American Farm Bureau Federation is not allowed to lobby the members of Congress from that state to support CAFTA.

And in Central America, two more countries, Honduras on March 3 and Guatemala on March 10, joined El Salvador in ratifying the agreement. In Honduras, lawmakers immediately fled

Congress to avoid massive protests surrounding the building. Guatemala's Congress was forced to delay the vote for days due to demands from protesters that the decision be submitted to a public referendum before being approved by Congress. Protests continued in Guatemala on March 14 as thousands of demonstrators clashed with police in the capital and roads and highways blocked and schools closed in other parts of the country. In Guatemala City, severe police repression was reported.

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## 2) Alliance for Responsible Trade: Central Americans Speak Out against CAFTA: Major Issues and Mobilizations

This brief reports outlines the key objections to CAFTA for each country and lists related local protests. Since the beginning of free trade negotiations focused on Central America, the United States has promised "regional stability, democracy and economic development." Meanwhile Central Americans have expressed a list of country specific grievances with the agreement. For example, one of Costa Rica's main concerns involves allowing foreign investors to take over its telecommunications system. This would significantly curb affordable access to cell phones, internet, and basic phone services, as well as spur massive layoffs. Guatemala disapproves of the intellectual property provisions in CAFTA that make it difficult to produce and market generic medicines. Honduras is concerned about the inevitable increase of the maquila sector and the continued deterioration of labor standards. In each country, it is clear that CAFTA has been met with opposition from citizens whose livelihood, safety and health are threatened by the corporate agenda.



Hondurans protest against the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) in Tegucigalpa, March 8, 2005. The National Congress of Honduras has ratified the CAFTA with the United States. REUTERS/Tomas Bravo

### Read more about the Central Americans opposition to CAFTA

[http://www.art-us.org/docs/DR\\_CAFTA\\_0503.pdf](http://www.art-us.org/docs/DR_CAFTA_0503.pdf)

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### **3) Americans Polled on CAFTA**

Americans For Fair Trade recently released results from their survey on public opinion regarding CAFTA. Their study showed that 51% of Americans across party lines oppose CAFTA and 32% approve. The survey highlighted job loss as the greatest concern to American voters. According to the Economic Policy Institute, during NAFTA about 800,000 jobs were lost. Many expressed that an increase in unemployment outweighed the benefits of having access to cheaper goods. For many Americans, the negative effects of NAFTA also foreshadow the weakening of labor and environmental standards as well as the negative shift in the U.S. economy predicted with the coming of CAFTA.

**Find more details about the poll and American public opinion to CAFTA**

[www.americansforfairtrade.org](http://www.americansforfairtrade.org)

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### **4) U.S Pressures Guatemala Regarding Data Exclusivity, CAFTA and Access to Medicines**

Médecins Sans Frontières and Health Gap condemn the United States for pressuring Guatemala to repeal legislation intended to protect their access to affordable generic medicines. Clearly embedded in the Doha Declaration, which the U.S Congress has promised to uphold, is the right of governments to “take measures to protect public health... and to promote access to medicines for all.” Instead of respecting this legislation, the United States insists that Guatemala grant “data exclusivity” rights to drug manufactures that would outlaw the use of safety and clinical data for at least five years. "We fear that our ability to ensure sustainable access to treatment for our patients, particularly people with HIV/AIDS, will be severely affected," said Dr. Karim Laouabdia, Director of Médecins Sans Frontières Campaign for Access to Essential Medicines.

**Read Health Gap’s response on the myths and realities of CAFTA’s intellectual property rights provisions**

[http://www.healthgap.org/press\\_releases/05/021005\\_HGAP\\_BP\\_CAFTA\\_guatemala.html](http://www.healthgap.org/press_releases/05/021005_HGAP_BP_CAFTA_guatemala.html)

**Read Médecins Sans Frontières press release: new Guatemalan law and intellectual property provisions in CAFTA threaten access to affordable medicines**

<http://www.msf.org/countries/page.cfm?articleid=D7E7D6AF-DB57-4521-B44914317B0DEC1F>

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### **5) The Impact of Trade Liberalization on Women’s Human Rights in the U.S.**

A new report by the International Gender and Trade Network presents findings from a seminar entitled: WTO +10 meets Beijing +10: The Impacts of Trade Liberalization on Women’s Human Rights in the U.S. The paper provides an overview on key concepts of liberalization

and moves through areas of employment, access to services, agriculture and food security discussing the ways in which women are negatively affected by irresponsible trade practices. Finally, the report offers recommendations to U.S trade policy makers that factor in the position of women in society and would work toward meeting the promises of the Beijing Platform to Action.

**Click here to read more about a gendered perspective to trade**

<http://www.igtn.org/NorthAmerica/US%20B10%20Report.pdf>

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## **6) Take Part in the Global Week of ACTION**

President Bush is trying to take CAFTA to Congress under the guise of expanding freedom and democracy. It has passed through extraordinarily undemocratic means in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala and has failed to address the concerns of unions, small farmers, and environmentalists. CAFTA promises to continue the drive towards outsourcing and threatens the U.S economy. The Global Week of Action is quickly approaching and we have the opportunity to express our disapproval of replicating the NAFTA model and organize ourselves in solidarity with Central Americans fighting for economic justice.

**Find out how you can get involved, plug into an event, or organize your own!**

<http://www.april2005.org/>