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## **National Democratic Party Picks Sides on Trade Debate**

*Faith, Farm, Labor & Environmental Groups Applaud Debut of Fair Trade Language into Platform*

Washington D.C. – After more than a decade of division within the National Democratic Party on the issue of free trade, the organization codified a clear position for the first time in their platform going to the Denver Convention next week. “This language is nothing less than groundbreaking,” said Andy Gussert, National Director of Citizens Trade Campaign. “For the first time, a presidential platform publicly and formally commits to amending past trade deals, ending more NAFTA-style agreements and reforming institutions like the G8 and World Trade Organization.” The final 2008 platform draft includes more than 3000 words across twenty-four separate pages that address trade and globalization issues.

NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, was first negotiated by President George Herbert Walker Bush, but Democrat Bill Clinton made its passage a priority in 1993. Since then, Democrats have often split on the issue of so-called “free trade”, and have increasingly moved away from supporting the NAFTA model in favor of reform. “This platform gives a clear indication, for the first time, where the Democratic Party is on fair trade,” added Gussert. “They want more of it.”

“It’s important to see a movement away from failed trade models of the past”, said Mark Levinson, Chief Economist of the labor union UNITE HERE! “The Obama Agenda describes trade as a positive international tool for bringing about enforceable labor and environmental standards, human rights, poverty alleviation and climate control. This is a major step forward.”

Members of the farming community are also supportive. “They’ve hit on several of the most egregious unfair trade practices—including currency manipulation, lax consumer standards and violations of environmental standards,” added Tom Buis, President of the National Farmers Union. “More importantly, they’ve promised to stand firm against future agreements that fail to live up to these benchmarks. This will allow American farmers to better compete on a more level playing field.”

State chapters of the *Citizens Trade Campaign* worked throughout the primary season to birddog the presidential candidates and seek commitments in trade and globalization issues, securing pledges from members of both parties. Most of the [strongest commitments](#) made by Senator Obama in response to written questionnaires ended up codified in the national platform language.

The platform outlines that no future bilateral trade agreements “*will stop the government from protecting the environment, food safety, or the health of its citizens; give greater rights to foreign investors than to U.S. investors; require the privatization of our vital public services; or prevent developing country governments from adopting humanitarian licensing policies to improve access to life-saving medications.*” The platform also adds that trade deals “*must not come as blank checks,*” and American support will only be “*coupled with an insistent call for reform*”.

“The platform includes welcome statements about trade helping to alleviate poverty in the developing world,” said Martin Shupack of Church World Service. “But to do that, the U.S. will have to fully respect the right of developing countries to safeguard and nurture their own domestic economies, and to promote and protect their own small-holder farmers, urban workers, and domestic manufacturers.”

“The language outlines a vision of trade that will serve the needs of the many instead of the few,” noted Sister Catherine Pinkerton CSJ, a NETWORK Staff Member. “Agreements should act as a tool to alleviate poverty and increase human rights across the world. Trade can be an instrument of development for both ourselves and our trading partners.”

No past state or federal platform, from either party, has covered the trade issue so in depth. “In the past, we were lucky to have trade mentioned, and settled for half a loaf,” added Gussert. “It’s nice when you get nine out of ten slices.”

Specific trade excerpts from the 2008 platform draft can be found at:

<http://www.citizenstrade.org/platform.php>

A current version of the 2008 platform in its entirety is located at:

[http://www.citizenstrade.org/pdf/2008democraticplatformbycmte\\_08-13-08.pdf](http://www.citizenstrade.org/pdf/2008democraticplatformbycmte_08-13-08.pdf)

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Citizens Trade Campaign (CTC) is a non-partisan national coalition of environmental, family farm, faith, and labor groups working for trade policy that reflects the majority of people in the U.S. and across the world. CTC is also pushing the RNC Platform Committee to adopt new trade language. For more information about this and other trade issues, email National Director Andy Gussert at [agussert@citizenstrade.org](mailto:agussert@citizenstrade.org).

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**Citizens Trade Campaign is a coalition of labor, environmental religious, family farm, and consumer organizations united in the pursuit of social and environmental justice in trade policy**