

# Minnesota Fair Trade Coalition



AFFILIATE OF **CITIZENS TRADE CAMPAIGN**

## [MN Congressional Leaders Help Launch Major Trade Reform](#)

**Minnesota Coalition Recognizes 5 of 106 Members for Cosponsoring Crucial Trade Reform Legislation**

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(Minneapolis, MN) - Five Members of Congress in Minnesota joined with over 100 of their colleagues today in supporting bipartisan consensus legislation to reform America's failed trade policy. The "2009 TRADE Act" reflects commitments made by President Obama over 2008 as well as reform promises made by Congressional candidates during the course of last year's campaigns.

House members kept those election year promises today by cosponsoring the TRADE Act, dubbed a more balanced way to expand trade. The list of cosponsors spans 33 states, and includes 8 prominent committee chairs, 45 subcommittee chairs, 19 members of the Congressional Black Caucus, 17 members of the Blue Dog Caucus and 13 "New Democrats". Five Members from Minnesota helped to make up that list, including Congressional Members Collin Peterson, James Oberstar, Keith Ellison, Betty McCollum, and Tim Walz.

"These members are to be applauded for taking the lead, and keeping their promise of reform," said Steve Hunter, Secretary Treasurer of the MN AFL-CIO. "We all support fair trade, and this bill is a clear articulation of what we're for, listing specific benchmarks for expansion. Instead of rhetoric, the TRADE Act calls for concrete results."

Entitled the Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment (TRADE) Act, the bill was first introduced by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Rep. Mike Michaud (D-Maine) last year, along with support from 80 additional cosponsors in the House and Senate. It is being introduced again this year, after 350 organizations contacted members of congress in February 2009 calling for reintroduction.

"America's farmers and ranchers produce the world's highest quality food and fiber," said Doug Peterson, Minnesota Farmers Union President. "However, our competitors do not have the same high environmental, health and safety standards as the United States. It's time America had a trade agenda that leveled the playing field for its agricultural producers."

Wade Luneburg, Policy Director of UNITE-HERE MN, added his organization's support, saying, "The TRADE Act makes sure that the benefits of trade go to the many workers as well as the richest few. It sets new rules for global trade that create good jobs and improve working conditions everywhere."

Margaret Levin, State Director of Sierra Club North Star Chapter, stated "Trade agreements should support, rather than undermine, environmental protection. The TRADE Act encourages responsible behavior from trading partners, providing a blueprint for a more sustainable way to move goods and services across borders."

According to Alicia Ranney, Director of the Minnesota Fair Trade Coalition, "The TRADE Act offers us all a fair way forward. It sets a balanced and transparent way to review and renegotiate past trade agreements like the Panama FTA which labor, environmental, and consumer groups haven't supported. The TRADE Act shows how future trade agreements can serve a majority of people on issues such as jobs, the environment, human rights and public health."

Ranney, along with others in the coalition, contend trade pacts such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and the stalled Panama Free Trade Agreement have not met up to basic promises. The TRADE Act articulates the specific changes needed to ensure future deals promote good jobs, safe food, basic human rights and environmental health.

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The [Minnesota Fair Trade Coalition](#) is a coalition of labor, environmental, faith, family farm, and social justice organizations united for a fair and democratic trade policy and a just global economy.