

PRESS STATEMENT

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THE SALVADORAN HOMETOWN ASSOCIATION (CUS) OPPOSES CAFTA

*The largest association of hometown associations in the WDC metro area announces opposition to CAFTA
in a letter sent to Rep. Moran (D-VA)*

**Member
Organizations:**

*Comunidad de
Chinameca, Fairfax,
VA*

*Comunidad de
Chapeltique,
Alexandria, VA*

*Comunidad de El
Chiquirin, Fairfax,
VA*

*Comunidad de
Uluazapa, WDC*

*Comunidad Los
Lagartos, Manassas,
VA*

*Comunidad de Santa
Elena, Silver Spring,
MD*

*Comunidad de
Ciudad Barrios,
Baltimore, MD*

*Association of
Salvadorans of MD,
SAMD,
Gaithersburg, MD*

*Comunidad de El
Tejar, WDC*

*USA Latino Youth,
WDC*

Alexandria, VA: A coalition of hometown associations representing thousands Salvadoran immigrants in the WDC metropolitan area sent a letter to Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA) expressing their concern about CAFTA urging him to change his position and oppose the Central American Free Trade Agreement, CAFTA.

“If Congressman Moran’s really cares about the lives of Central American people, he should stand with the people of Central American and oppose CAFTA,” stated Luis Felipe Romero, President of CUS and SAMD. “CAFTA will only displace small farmers in our communities and increase unemployment in the rural sector. That will force people to want to continue to migrate to the USA like many of us had to do already,” stated Mr. Romero.

CUS opposition to CAFTA is not ideological; it is based on our experienced working to improve the lives of our families in our communities of origin. For many years now, we have raised funds to build homes, nutrition centers, build roads, schools, clinics, soccer fields and training centers. We have done this because our communities are poor and as immigrants who had the opportunity to come to the US we feel obligated to give back to our families who stay behind. However, we have come to realize that the little we are able to send back, will never solve the problems of lack of economic opportunities for those left behind.

“In my hometown of Chapeltique or in San Salvador there is no work for young people. The first thing they want to do when they turn 16 years old, is come to the US,” states Hugo Carballo, president of La Comunidad de Chapeltique. “As immigrants, we cannot continue to sit idle while the governments of our countries of origin come to the US to plead our US representatives to support their failed economic policies. CAFTA will only make our communities poorer.”

CUS would welcome a trade agreement that would increase economic opportunity, protect small farmers, conserve the environment, and guarantee workers’ rights. However, the CAFTA agreement falls far short of creating an environment of respect for Salvadoran workers. Over and over again, we hear stories of women in the garment sector, maquilas, who are exploited, harassed, intimidated or fired if they try to stand up for their rights. The government of El Salvador has routinely failed to enforce the laws and CAFTA will only embolden them to continue turning a blind eye every time workers are abused.

We do not want immigration to be the only economic option for our people. We dream of a Central America that provides dignified opportunities for our families and allows young people to stay in their communities. Unfortunately, CAFTA will only worsen the economic realities of our families and take us farther from that dream.

CUS is the largest regional coalition of Salvadoran hometown associations founded in 2001 as a coordinated response to provide humanitarian aid to the victims of the earthquakes that devastated El Salvador in 2001. Our member organizations are comprised of immigrants who come from El Salvador and organize into associations to raise funds and build needed infrastructure projects and programs in their communities of origin.

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