

Wisconsin FAIR TRADE Coalition

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Congressional Leaders Launch Bold New Trade Reform Act

*WFTC Praises Sen. Feingold, Cong. Baldwin, Kagen, Moore for
Cosponsoring Legislation*

Milwaukee – The Wisconsin Fair Trade Coalition (WFTC) praised members of Wisconsin’s congressional delegation for cosponsoring the *Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment (TRADE) Act*, which was introduced by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Rep. Mike Michaud (D-Maine) today in Washington D.C.

The act triggers a review of all existing trade agreements, and provides a process to renegotiate them. The bill also outlines principles of what should be included in future trade agreements, and expresses the sense of the Congress that their role in trade policymaking should be strengthened.

“The TRADE Act is a critical piece of legislation that would provide a much needed change to our nation’s broken trade system,” said Sachin Chheda, Director of the WFTC. “I applaud Senator Feingold and Congresspeople Baldwin, Kagen, and Moore for cosponsoring this bill, which will go a long way towards protecting American workers from unfair trade policies that have decimated the American economy.”

"The TRADE Act restores Congress's constitutional right of oversight in trade policy. The Bush Administration has trampled on that right," said Communications Workers of America President Larry Cohen. "The landmark legislation that is being introduced today will ensure that no matter who occupies the Oval Office, Congress will have a meaningful say in trade policy."

“This bill breaks new ground on the enforcement of labor rights, environmental protection, food and product safety, procurement, safeguards against surges of imports, trade remedies against unfair trade practices, and the ability for countries to regulate foreign investment,” said Bruce Raynor, General President of UNITE HERE.

The TRADE Act was introduced following a presidential primary season that saw trade policy rise to the top of American’s concerns. With several Democratic candidates promising to renegotiate existing agreements (commitments that can be viewed at www.wisconsinfairtrade.org), the TRADE Act provides a blueprint for how to best remedy many of these past problems in trade agreements.

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The current U.S. trade model has had devastating impacts. Since 1975, when Fast Track was first enacted, the trade deficit has gone from a slight surplus to an unsustainable \$709 billion deficit in 2007. A net 4.7 million manufacturing jobs have been lost. American worker productivity doubled but median wages are only 1 percent above 1970s levels.

The TRADE Act articulates specific changes needed to the failed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)/World Trade Organization (WTO) model to ensure trade deals achieve good jobs, safe food and the promotion of basic human rights, healthy communities and environmental protection.

“As this bill winds its way through Congress, we urge all of Wisconsin’s congressional delegation to consider the positive impact this legislation would have on our economy, and we look forward to working with them on this critical issue in the future.”

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