



A Fair Trade Breakthrough: The T.R.A.D.E. Act

On Wednesday, over 50 Members of Congress, including Representatives Al Green (D-9) and Gene Green (D-29), introduced a new bill that lays out a fair trade agenda for the future. The bill was spearheaded by Rep. Mike Michaud (D-ME) and Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH).

The TRADE Act (Trade Reform, Accountability, Development, and Employment) lays out a framework for how we can turn our free trade policies into fair trade policies, and how we can create a more democratic, just approach to globalization.

Specifically, the TRADE Act:

- * Requires a review of existing trade pacts, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other major pacts.
- * Sets forth what must and must not be included in future trade pacts.
- * Provides for the renegotiation of existing trade agreements.
- * Describes the key elements of a new trade negotiating and approval mechanism to replace Fast Track that would enhance the role of Congress and the public in crafting trade agreements that can meet the needs of workers, family farmers, and the environment.

For a long time, we have had one battle after another trying to defeat harmful free trade agreements. From NAFTA to CAFTA, we have had to make a case for why we are against these agreements. Starting today, we can make the case for what we are for. The T.R.A.D.E. Act lays out a vision that all types of groups can get behind. This Act is strongly supported by the Texas Fair Trade Coalition, the Citizens Trade Campaign, and 20 different union, environmental, consumer, family farm, and faith groups.

John Sweeney, President, AFL-CIO -- "The AFL-CIO is proud to support the TRADE Act. It is past time to restructure U.S. trade policy to work for working families -- here at home and around the world."

Greg Tarpinian, Executive Director, Change To Win -- "The TRADE Act lays the foundation for creating fair trade agreements that will help working families achieve the American Dream in the 21st century economy."

Tom Buis, President of National Farmers Union -- "The TRADE Act defines a plan for a fair trade policy that will allow American agriculture to compete on a level playing field."

Margrete Strand Rangnes, Director of the Sierra Club's Trade Program -- "This Act has the potential to set straight the history of NAFTA and the WTO to encourage truly sustainable development that promises to benefit the majority of the world's people, whether farmers or business owners, while protecting our resources for future generations."

Time to Take Action

The T.R.A.D.E. Act has the potential to reshape the trade landscape in a fundamental way, but only if we can build a movement behind it. We're going to have to spread the word all across Texas, and get our Democratic and Republican Congress Members alike to sponsor this legislation. This will only happen if you get involved. Join us on a conference call next Thursday, June 12th at 3:30pm (CST) to map out our Texas T.R.A.D.E. Act campaign. Get call-in information and RSVP by e-mailing marc@texasfairtrade.org.

In the meantime, contact your Member of Congress and urge them to support the T.R.A.D.E. Act -- (HR 6180 and S 3083). Go to http://action.citizen.org/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=24836 or call the Congressional switchboard at 1-800-828-0498 and ask for your Representative and Senators.

Check out the House bill (HR 6180) at <http://www.citizenstrade.org/pdf/HouseTRADEActFinal.pdf>.

Check out the Senate bill (S 3083) at <http://brown.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/TRADE%20Act.pdf>.