

Statement from UNITE HERE General President Bruce Raynor in support of The Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment (TRADE) Act of 2008

A massive trade deficit of more than \$2 billion per day, more than 3.3 million lost manufacturing jobs, stagnating wages for most workers, more than 40,000 facilities that have closed their doors since 2000 – it is not surprising that economic issues and our failed trade policies are top concerns of voters in this election year.

To ensure that workers gain their share of a growing economy we need new economic and industrial policies whose goal is full employment and rising living standards for workers. But we also need a new trade policy.

That is why I enthusiastically support the TRADE Act, sponsored by Sen. Sherrod Brown and Rep. Michael Michaud. This new initiative is an example of trade legislation that breaks with the NAFTA – WTO model. The idea behind this bill is that trade should not be an end in itself, but rather a means for achieving societal goals such as economic justice, promotion of basic human rights and environmental wellbeing.

This bill breaks new ground on 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.

I hope the introduction of this bill will move the trade debate back to where it should be. The issue is not whether we are for or against trade, but rather, what are the rules, and who benefits.

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UNITE HERE represents 465,000 workers in the hotel, food service, gaming, laundry, apparel and textile industries.