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Lawmakers Urge Central America on Trade

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Two U.S. congressional members have sent a letter urging Central American lawmakers to wait before approving their region's proposed free trade agreement with the United States.

The letter, dated Tuesday and circulated to the media Wednesday in El Salvador, said the U.S. Congress is unlikely to approve the Central American Free Trade Agreement in the near future.

It was signed by Rep. Raul Grijalva, a Democrat from Arizona, and Rep. Hilda Solis, a Democrat from California. Both oppose CAFTA because they say it lacks adequate environmental and labor protections.

"We respectfully suggest to you that when considering a trade agreement with such profound implications for all the nations of Central America, you should not be swayed by the argument that you must vote to ratify because the U.S. Congress is certain to do the same," the letter said. "This argument is not only based on false premises, but could create a 'rush to judgment' that all the CAFTA nations would come to regret."

In order to take effect, CAFTA must be approved by the congresses of each of its members nations: the United States, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic.

El Salvador's Congress is considering the agreement now, and is expected to vote on it soon.