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## **Bush trade rep: No adding textile protections to CAFTA**

### **Burr, Bowles, Dole say their support hinges on shielding Carolinas jobs**

When questions arose about the Central American Free Trade Agreement recently, Republican U.S. Senate candidate Richard Burr declared he will only support the treaty if changes are made to protect textile workers. Burr is a congressman from Winston-Salem, but Congress has no power to change the treaty.

Burr's spokesman later said the changes could be made by the Bush administration renegotiating parts of the treaty.

An administration spokesman said that's not going to happen.

Burr discussed the treaty during a news conference last Friday announcing that Sen. Elizabeth Dole would chair his campaign. That same day, President Bush signed the trade treaty. Textile unions have criticized the agreement, which expands NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement often blamed for widespread textile job losses.

Dole took the same position as Burr.

CAFTA extends the free trade zone to the five central American countries that signed: Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua.

Although Burr and Dole spoke of needed changes in the treaty, it will go through the "fast track" process, which means members of Congress can't change it. They can only vote for or against it.

Burr's spokesman, Doug Heye, said the Bush administration could go back and "renegotiate the terms on textiles."

A spokesman for the U.S. Trade Representative's office, the arm of the Bush administration that negotiated the treaty, said there won't be any renegotiations. "The CAFTA is a completed agreement," said spokesman Rich Mills.

When NAFTA passed in 1993, it removed trade barriers between the United States, Mexico and Canada, a move billed as creating new markets for U.S. textiles. U.S. companies could make the cloth, ship it to Mexico to have it cut and assembled, then send the goods back for finishing and sale. While the treaty initially worked, changes in Asian currency allowed Chinese textile companies to undercut the U.S./Mexican prices by a wide margin. Critics argue Chinese companies have illegally shipped goods through Mexico to the United States.

CAFTA would add the five new countries to the zone created by the United States, Mexico and Canada.

A spokeswoman for Erskine Bowles, the expected Democratic Senate candidate, said Burr was forced by events to take a position on CAFTA.

"Richard Burr has been on all sides of this issue," said Susan Lagana, Bowles' communications director. "I'm glad he ended up in the right place, but I don't think the people of North Carolina will know how Richard Burr will vote until he has no choice but to take a position."

Bowles opposes CAFTA.

Burr spokesman Heye said Burr has been consistent: Without the textile protections, he will oppose CAFTA. Heye said Bowles has no room to criticize, given that he supported NAFTA and most-favored-nation trading status for China while chief of staff to President Clinton but now opposes them. Burr, though, also has switched from supporting NAFTA to opposing it. "Once (Bowles) decided he wanted to be a senator, that's when he abandoned all the things he fought for under Bill Clinton," Heye said. "If he wants to campaign against somebody, he should campaign against himself."

The vote on CAFTA is expected to be delayed until after this year's election.

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