

SAMPLE PROPOSAL FOR A LOCAL TRADE OVERSIGHT COMMISSION

A [X-State] International Trade Oversight Commission

Context:

Increasing Reach of Trade Rules

Over the past ten years, trade agreements have had an increasingly far-reaching impact on [X-State] workers and communities. The job creation promised from trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement has never materialized. In fact with every trade agreement the U.S. has entered into, we have gone from a trade surplus to a trade deficit. [X-State trade impact fact]. And the movement of companies to sweatshop areas in Mexico and Asia has led to downward pressure on wages and working conditions.

With the passage of NAFTA in 1994, trade agreements went from being merely adjustments of tariffs and quotas to powerful rules impacting a wide range of domestic regulations and democratic processes. NAFTA established a powerful dispute resolution mechanism that allows foreign corporations to file suit in NAFTA tribunals over loss of expected profits due to domestic public interest regulations.

New rules currently being negotiated in the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) could have substantial impacts on US law and on [X-State's] state and local laws. The thrust of these agreements is to substantially restrict the right of elected officials at all levels to legislate in the public interest.

Decreasing Representative Involvement

At the same time as trade agreements are being extended in scope and having a greater impact on national, state, and local legislative authority, Congressional involvement in setting the terms of trade policy has been restricted with the passage of Fast Track trade negotiation authority. Mechanisms supposedly established for Congressional or state involvement such as the Congressional Oversight Group or the United States Trade Representative's State Points of Contact have proven meaningless in terms of active involvement or access. Trade advisory committees have largely been stripped of civic participants while business interests maintain privileged access to trade negotiators.

Nearly all state and local elected officials, and even many members of Congress, are unaware of the scope of these negotiations and the breadth of their potential impact.

Concept:

In order to remedy this gap of involvement and access, we suggest the creation of a [X-State] international trade oversight commission to bring together local leaders to monitor the potential impacts on [X-State] of these in ongoing negotiations. The goals would be:

- 1) To monitor developments in international trade negotiations and agreements,
- 2) To highlight the effects of current and proposed trade policies on [X-State], and
- 3) To serve as a point of communication with the Administration and US trade negotiators

The commission would be comprised of community leaders, state and local elected officials, and one or more members of the [X-State] Congressional delegation. It would meet on a quarterly or "as needed" basis to review local trade impacts and developments in trade negotiations, would solicit public input through hearings and otherwise, and would present this information, as appropriate, to the public and to [X-State] and federal governing bodies and elected officials. It would also communicate with US trade negotiators as needed.