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Joan Claybrook, President

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Contact: Chris Slevin (202) 454-5140

CAFTA Limpes to House Where Its Fate Will Be Sealed

54-45 CAFTA Passage is Closest Senate Trade Vote Since NAFTA

Statement by Lori M. Wallach, Director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch

Because the proposed CAFTA expansion of NAFTA to six additional nations faces stiff opposition in the House, its supporters pushed for a Senate vote first, given that the Senate typically provides easy approvals of any and all trade deals. CAFTA's narrow margin of approval in the Senate is the antithesis of momentum.

The Senate margin of approval for this NAFTA expansion (54-45) is the tightest Senate trade vote in the past dozen years, showing the depth of opposition to the NAFTA model that has been built by 11 years of living with NAFTA's negative impacts. NAFTA's 61-vote Senate passage in 1993 was the tightest previous Senate trade vote.

A majority of House members, including a significant number of Republicans, now oppose CAFTA while another sizeable bloc of GOP House members remains uncommitted. The Bush administration, having failed at selling CAFTA on its merits, is trying to make "deals" to buy votes. However, wariness about constituents' lingering anger over damaging U.S. trade policies and the past record of deals-for-trade-votes not being fulfilled has made this ugly process less effective.

Pacts like CAFTA are no longer just about tariffs and quotas, but rather dictate what land use, food safety, drug patent, procurement, environmental, energy and other service policies signatory nations must implement.

Since the effects of NAFTA began to confirm the fears of citizens across the nation who fought against its passage over a decade ago, these activists and the communities they have educated and organized have made their concerns clear to elected officials, and will continue to over the July 4 congressional recess.

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Past Senate Trade Votes

Morocco FTA (2004)
Unanimous Consent Voice Vote

China PNTR (2000)
83 Yeas 15 Nays 2 N

NAFTA (1993)
61 Yeas 38 Nays 1 NV

Australia FTA (2004)
80 Yeas, 16 Nays, 4 NV

WTO (1994)
76 Yeas 24 Nays

Fast Track (2002)
64 Yeas 34 Nays 2 NV

Singapore FTA (2003)
66 Yeas, 32 Nays, 2 NV

Chile FTA (2003)
65 Yeas, 32 Nays, 3 NV

Jordan FTA (2001)
Unanimous Consent Voice Vote