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Contact: 202-224-5653

KOHL ANNOUNCES OPPOSITION TO CENTRAL AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Senator cites concern over labor, health and safety laws in six Central American countries included in the trade agreement

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Herb Kohl today said that he will oppose the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), the plan to lower trade barriers between the United States and the Central American countries of Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and the Dominican Republic. Kohl cited his concerns over CAFTA's rules on workers' rights in a region where labor laws fall far short of minimum international standards. The President is expected to formally present the agreement for consideration in the Senate and House of Representatives soon and the House could vote on CAFTA before Memorial Day.

"As a businessman I recognize that international markets are important to our economy, but this is yet another trade agreement that lacks significant labor, health, safety and environmental protections," Kohl said. "That sort of trade pact has tended not to work for us."

Kohl has heard from American workers that CAFTA's rules are a step backward from the labor conditions that exist in current trade programs with Central America. There is concern that some CAFTA countries lack adequate protections for workers' rights in their labor codes and that, even where such rights are spelled out, enforcement mechanisms are inadequate.