

Rep. Hilda L. Solis Continues Fight Against CAFTA in Congress as Latino Opposition Continues to Grow

Vows to Work with Concerned Organizations to

Consolidate the Growing Majority of Latinos Against CAFTA

Washington D.C.- Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis (CA-32) today vowed to continue her efforts to expand a fast-growing majority of Latino voters in the U.S. and in Central America that oppose the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), a controversial trade deal between the U.S. and the Central American region. Congresswoman Solis also pledged to work overtime to create a more unified opposition to CAFTA among Democrats in the House of Representatives and within the Latino community.

"Like NAFTA before it, CAFTA will hurt Latino workers and small businesses on both sides of the border and will only serve to worsen conditions for workers for the benefit of a handful of multinational corporations," said Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis. "I will continue to work closely with the Latino community and the organizations that represent them to make sure we are united in our efforts to defeat CAFTA."

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the nation's oldest and largest member-based league of U.S. Latinos is now strongly opposed to CAFTA after supporting NAFTA in 1993. "CAFTA promises to eliminate poverty but the truth is that the deal fails to improve worker's lives. Until we are assured that CAFTA meets proposed standards of poverty elimination that trade agreements are expected to comply with, Latinos in the United States will be adversely affected by the deal. CAFTA is not the silver bullet that it appears to be," said Gabriela Lemus, Director of Policy and Legislation for LULAC.

"Latino workers in the border area have suffered heavy U.S. job losses in manufacturing from NAFTA," said Jesse Rios, Executive Director, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, the first national organization to represent the views of Latino workers seeking justice at the workplace. "CAFTA is an expansion of the NAFTA nightmare that has denied the American dream to Latino working families on both sides of the border."

Americans For Fair Trade recently announced the results of a research survey that showed that Latinos in the U.S. oppose CAFTA by a 47 to 40 percent margin after hearing a series of positive and negative statements about the deal. As with voters overall, loss of American jobs is a significant concern to U.S. Latino voters.

A recent Gallup poll also demonstrates that the perceptions of adults in Guatemala about CAFTA have changed dramatically in the last three months. The March 2005 survey found that 65 percent of respondents believe CAFTA will hurt the country, a 30 percent increase since December.

Congresswoman Solis is the only Member of Congress of Central American descent. She is a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, becoming the first Latina to serve on this committee, and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, where she serves as the Chair of the Caucus' Task Force on Health.