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Congressman Brown Denounces Central American Free Trade Agreement Announcement

Congressman Sherrod Brown issued the following statement in response to the Bush administration announcement this week that it reached a free-trade agreement with four Central American countries.

"It defies logic that the President Bush would continue to pursue the failed NAFTA model of trade for trade's sake at the expense of increasingly scarce American jobs," said Brown, whose Northeast Ohio district includes the manufacturing hubs of Akron and Lorain.

Since President Bush took office, the United States has lost 2.6 million manufacturing jobs. The state of Ohio has lost 157,700 manufacturing jobs since 2001, and 6,000 manufacturing jobs last month alone. Brown said the implementation of CAFTA will simply increase that already large number.

"The administration and USTR have once again chosen to line the pockets of multi-national corporations and leave American workers with a lump of coal in their stockings.

"CAFTA offers the United States a larger trade deficit and the loss of more textile, manufacturing, and other U.S. jobs.

"To the Bush administration two fundamentals of free trade are the ability to exploit cheap foreign labor and take advantage of those nations' weaker environmental standards.

"Supporters of these agreements claim that free trade agreements open new markets for U.S. exports, yet our trade deficit gets worse and worse. These free-wheeling trade pacts export U.S. jobs, not U.S. goods.

"I don't know how they can call this success, when the most developed nation in the region, Costa Rica, walked away from the negotiating table. Free trade agreements need to be a two way street. As it stands, CAFTA is a one-way ticket to more American job loss," Brown said.

Brown, a senior member of both the House Energy and Commerce and International Relations Committees, is a national leader in the effort to promote global fair trade and protect U.S. jobs. He is a staunch opponent of NAFTA and played a principal role in two successful efforts in the House to defeat Fast Track negotiating authority. Brown is also the top Democrat on the Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee.

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