



Minnesota Fair Trade Coalition

AFFILIATE OF CITIZENS TRADE CAMPAIGN

2511 Franklin Avenue E. Minneapolis, MN 55406 • (612) 578 – 8266

Congressional Leaders Launch Bold New Trade Reform Act

Minnesota Fair Trade Coalition Endorses TRADE Act, Reps. Ellison and Peterson Co-sponsor

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Contact: Alicia Ranney

Phone: (612) 578-8266

Minneapolis – The Minnesota Fair Trade Coalition commend Representatives Keith Ellison (D-05) and Collin Peterson (D-07) for their positive support for a new vision of trade policy. Over fifty original House and Senate cosponsors joined twenty leading labor, environmental, family farm and faith groups in supporting new consensus legislation offering a positive vision for future U.S. trade policy. Entitled the *Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment (TRADE) Act*, the bill was introduced by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Rep. Mike Michaud (D-Maine) today in Washington D.C.

The act triggers a review of all existing trade agreements, and provides a process to renegotiate them. The bill also outlines principles of what should be included in future trade agreements, and expresses the sense of the Congress that their role in trade policymaking should be strengthened. “The TRADE Act’s clear articulation of what we’re for, and its very specific benchmarks for current and future trade agreements provides a balanced way forward that grounds our trade policy on the impact these policies have on American’s everyday lives,” said Rep. Michaud. “Instead of rhetoric, the TRADE Act calls for concrete results.”

“The TRADE Act represents a positive step forward in international trade policy. I commend the authors and coauthors of the bill, including Minnesota Reps. Peterson and Ellison and ask all of our congressional delegation to support this legislation,” said Steve Hunter, Minnesota AFL-CIO Secretary/Treasurer.

“The TRADE Act defines a plan for a fair trade policy that will allow American agriculture to compete on a level playing field. Under the current free trade agenda Americas trading partners are not required to meet the same high labor, environmental, and health and safety standards as American farmers and ranchers,” said Minnesota Farmers Union President, Doug Peterson.

“Global trade has the potential to be a powerful force for democracy and economic and social justice throughout the world, if done correctly. The TRADE Act is the beginning of the discussion about how we can do trade fairly, without destroying our environment or the livelihoods of American working families in the process,” said Russell Hess, President of Southeast Central Labor Council AFL-CIO.

Dennis Olson of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy Action, also praised the initiative, saying, “For too long, trade agreements have deregulated agricultural markets to promote exports at any cost,” said Dennis Olson of Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy Action. “Unfortunately, the growing world food crisis, contrasted with windfall profits of transnational agribusiness cartels, reflects the absolute bankruptcy of this failed NAFTA-WTO model. This bill outlines a new approach



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that establishes the right of all countries to increase food self-sufficiency based on independent family farm agriculture and sound conservation practices."

The TRADE Act was introduced following a presidential primary season that saw trade policy rise to the top of American's concerns. With several Democratic candidates promising to renegotiate existing agreements (visit www.citizenstrade.org/positions.php for those commitments), the TRADE Act provides a blueprint for how to best remedy many of these past problems in trade agreements.

According to the Director of the Minnesota Fair Trade Coalition, Alicia Ranney, "Labor, family farm, environmental and other progressive organizations want to see a responsible expansion of trade. The TRADE Act is a balanced way to expand trade, offering us all a fair way to move forward.

The current U.S. trade model has had devastating impacts. Since 1975, when Fast Track was first enacted, the trade deficit has gone from a slight surplus to an unsustainable \$709 billion deficit in 2007. A net 4.7 million manufacturing jobs have been lost. American worker productivity doubled but median wages are only 1 percent above 1970s levels. In Minnesota, over 40,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost due to trade since 1993.

The bill articulates specific changes needed to the failed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)/World Trade Organization (WTO) model to ensure trade deals achieve good jobs, safe food and the promotion of basic human rights, healthy communities and environmental protection.

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