

The Honorable _____
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative _____,

I am writing to thank you for making the right choice to vote against the U.S.-Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) on July 28, 2005. As one of your constituents, I am heartened to know that you supported working people in the United States and Central America in opposing this trade agreement. Despite the claims of DR-CAFTA negotiators, prosperity for both urban and rural working people WILL NOT be created by favoring large multinational corporations. On the contrary, it will serve only to further consolidate power and resources in the hands of those who already have far too much, to the detriment of those who are just getting by.

It saddened me deeply to see the way in which Congressional leadership used last minute carrot-and-stick incentives and threats to influence the vote. Using fear of reprisals in the form of limiting access to funds that are necessary for their constituencies, some members of Congress were intimidated to vote in favor of an agreement that will do long-term damage to millions of people.

The ultimate question regarding trade agreements and issues is "From where do trade agreements come and whom do they benefit?" Many times the answer is that the same parties both negotiate and benefit from trade agreements. DR-CAFTA was negotiated in secret, to the exclusion of broad-based citizen participation, and without democratic accessibility. Business interests in Central America had access to confidential reports about access to DR-CAFTA's effects on the US economy that US representatives did not, (The Hill, 4/29/05).

The huge outcry and participation of hundreds of thousands of Central and North Americans in demonstrations against DR-CAFTA indicates the extent to which the general populace realizes this type of trade agreement will hurt them. There are a number of reasons why working people throughout the continent support FAIR trade agreements that encourage the health of individuals and communities through self-determination. The DR-CAFTA, however, does the opposite. In a number of ways it erodes the vitality and resources of individuals, families, communities, and local governments and places control in the hands of large businesses.

- 1) Labor. DR-CAFTA requires only that countries enforce their own labor codes. According to the State Department, Guatemala does not effectively protect workers who attempt to form unions, who often meet with violent reprisals. In contrast, there are powerful trade sanctions and unlimited cash damages if a country is found in violation of DR-CAFTA's *commercial* provisions.
- 2) Agriculture. Under DR-CAFTA, Central American countries and the Dominican Republic will be required to eliminate import tariffs on staple products such as corn and beans upon which the livelihoods of more than 5.5 million small and medium producers depend. The U.S. subsidies that allow U.S. food to be sold under market value entering the Central American marketplace will wreak havoc on rural economies and families, much as 1.5 million Mexican small farmers were displaced under NAFTA.
- 3) Investment. CAFTA's Chapter 10 is modeled after NAFTA's Chapter 11, allowing foreign investors to bring complaints before international tribunals against any government implementing policies that might affect profits the investor *projects to receive* in the future. Under NAFTA, there have been at least 28 cases presented by transnational corporations against the U.S., Canadian and Mexican governments for loss of process due to one regulatory process or another.

The passage of DR-CAFTA is a shame for our country. To maintain policies that continue to extract wealth from some of the poorest people in this hemisphere in order to line the pockets of the wealthiest is reprehensible. I hope the next time you are faced with a trade agreement, you will continue to prioritize the interests of working people in the U.S. and abroad over the interests of large corporations.

Sincerely,

