

Rep. Michaud and Sen. Brown Introduce TRADE Act

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WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congressman Mike Michaud (D-ME), co-founder of the House Trade Working Group, joined with Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) in introducing the "Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment (TRADE) Act." Michaud and Brown worked with an array of labor, environmental, consumer, faith and family farm organizations to develop a bill that presents a progressive vision of what a good trade agreement should include.

The TRADE Act requires a review of existing trade agreements, and a renegotiation of existing trade agreements based on that review. It sets terms of what must and must not be included in future trade agreements, and expresses the sense of the Congress that the role of Congress in trade policymaking should be strengthened. A more detailed fact sheet on the TRADE Act can be found below.

"The current trade model has not served the interests of a majority of Americans and has led to public demand for change," said Michaud. "The TRADE Act sets out what we support - it is a roadmap for what we are for. It represents a tremendous step forward in fixing our broken trade policies and it sets a new course on trade that will benefit businesses and workers in the United States. In this election year, with trade such a major focus of the debate, it's important that the American people and the presidential candidates hear our message on trade. This legislation will help shape the debate on trade for years to come."

Michaud is a co-founder of the House Trade Working Group (HTWG), a bipartisan group of Members of Congress committed to advocating for fair trade policies. Earlier this year the HTWG was successful in working with the congressional leadership to put a halt to the Colombian Free Trade Agreement. Michaud and his colleagues in the HTWG also led the opposition to the Central American Free Trade Agreement. Michaud recently organized meetings and conference calls between the HTWG and the Clinton and Obama campaigns to discuss the issues of trade and globalization.

"I support responsible trade between the United States and countries across the globe," said Michaud. "But our current system has not worked, has not met past promises, and has not served the interests of a majority of people across our country, or the world. This bill sets forth concrete ways to deliver on our shared conviction that trade must serve as a means for achieving goals such as economic justice and promotion of basic human rights, healthy communities and environmental

well-being."

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Fact Sheet

"Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment (TRADE) Act"

What does the bill do?

The TRADE Act requires a review of existing trade agreements, and a renegotiation of existing trade agreements based on that review. It sets terms of what must and must not be included in future trade agreements, and expresses the sense of the Congress that the role of Congress in trade policymaking should be strengthened.

The TRADE Act shifts the debate towards discussing a new trade and globalization model. It moves beyond repeatedly fighting against expansions of the old failed model and sets a marker for where discussion should start with a new Congress and president in 2009. One of our nation's greatest challenges is to create new rules for globalization that ensure economic security and the creation of quality U.S. jobs and offer opportunities for sustainable development in poor countries, thus countering rising income inequality and the threats our current policies pose to national security, our shared global environment, public health and safety, and democratic accountability.

We must take action now to shape the future debate. The TRADE Act recognizes the Democratic presidential candidates' calls to renegotiate some pacts and brings Congress into this process.

The TRADE Act includes:

Section 2:

A list of which trade agreements must be reviewed and defines the labor and environmental standards all agreements must contain.

Section 3: Requires the GAO to conduct a comprehensive review of existing major trade agreements by June 10, 2010, including economic outcomes in the U.S. and abroad and various

security and social indicators. The TRADE Act also requires an analysis of how the current agreements measure up against the detailed description in the bill of what must and must not be included in future U.S. trade agreements.

Section 4: Enumerates labor, environment, food and product safety standards; national security exceptions; and trade remedy and federalism protections that must be included in all American trade pacts. Because NAFTA-model trade agreements extend far beyond traditional trade matters, this section also sets requirements with respect to public services, farm policy, investment, government procurement, and affordable medicines.

Section 5: Requires the president to submit renegotiation plans to remedy the gaps identified by the Comptroller General between our current pacts and the criteria for good agreements listed in Section 4 prior to negotiating new agreements and prior to congressional consideration of pending agreements.

Section 6: Establishes a committee comprised of the chairs and ranking members of each committee whose jurisdiction is implicated by today's expansive "trade" agreements to review the president's plan for renegotiations.

Section 7: A sense-of-the-Congress provision that sets out criteria for a new mechanism to replace the Fast Track negotiating process. To obtain agreements that benefit a wider array of interests, this new process includes Congress setting readiness criteria to select future negotiating partners; mandatory negotiating objectives based on the Section 4 criteria of what must be and must not be in future trade agreements; and the requirements that Congress must certify that the objectives were met, and then vote on an agreement before it can be signed.