

Press Release

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SCHAKOWSKY SPEAKS OUT IN FAVOR OF DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT AT BIPARTISAN RALLY AGAINST CAFTA

VOTE EXPECTED THIS WEEK

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, Ranking Member on the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection, today spoke at a rally with a large bipartisan coalition of Members of Congress and allied organizations on the West Lawn of the Capitol. A vote on CAFTA is expected later this week.

Below is Representative Schakowsky's statement:

"In the final hours before Congress votes on this flawed trade agreement, opposition to CAFTA is stronger and more widespread than ever."

"We know the economics are on our side. CAFTA would extend NAFTA further south. The United States has lost nearly a million jobs since NAFTA, and Illinois nearly 100,000. There is no reason for the United States to create further incentives for companies to outsource jobs to countries with lower wages."

"Now CAFTA's supporters are claiming the agreement will encourage development and spread democracy throughout Central America and the Dominican Republic. But we know the truth, that the promises of CAFTA are just empty rhetoric. CAFTA is being pushed through with an iron fist, keeping those whom would be affected the most by this

trade agreement away from the negotiating table."

"Is it democratic to shut out union representatives, farmers, teachers and public health workers from negotiations over their own economic future?"

"Is it democratic to do what the legislature did in El Salvador and push through a vote in the middle of the night to block legislators who opposed the agreement from stopping it?"

"Is it democratic to ignore the hundreds of thousands of Central Americans who turned out in the streets to protest against CAFTA?"

"Is it democratic to negotiate a trade agreement that offers better protections for cheap, mass produced goods and big corporations than it does for working people?"

"Democracy can be strengthened by development and expanded trade, but you can be sure that most people in the DR-CAFTA countries will never see higher wages or better jobs because of this agreement. Instead, CAFTA would speed up the global 'race to the bottom.' These countries are some of the poorest in the hemisphere. Those at the top hold all the wealth, while the working poor barely earn enough to survive. CAFTA will directly hit farmers and industrial workers in Central America, driving down their wages and keeping them down."

"For a sign of what's to come under CAFTA, look at Mexico. The middle class that was supposed to arise after NAFTA is missing. I visited Ciudad Juarez, Mexico on the tenth anniversary of NAFTA. Instead of finding a thriving Mexican middle class, I found workers living in the packing crates of the products that they were manufacturing. Mexico's poverty rates have actually increased since NAFTA. CAFTA would just spread these conditions further south by offering multinational corporations new opportunities to profit off the backs of low-wage workers. That means more jobs leaving the U.S. And we certainly can't afford to lose another 1 million jobs like we did after NAFTA."

"Democracy and development might go hand-in-hand, but both need to reach the masses to succeed. By not providing any protections for workers, CAFTA would exploit those it purports to help. Any hope for development will be replaced by a race to the bottom. Today we stand in solidarity with the hundreds of thousands of Central Americans and Dominicans who have marched in the streets to say they deserve a real chance at strengthening their democracies and developing their countries. We're united in saying no to CAFTA."