

Press Release

**JUNE 15, 2005**

**SCHAKOWSKY JOINS MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, CENTRAL AMERICAN LEGISLATORS TO HIGHLIGHT CAFTA'S THREAT TO MINORITIES AND WORKERS**

**WASHINGTON, DC -- U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today joined Rep. Marcy Kaptur, Central American legislators, and Members of Congress at a press conference on Capitol Hill to highlight the effect CAFTA would have on minorities in the U.S. and on Central Americans.**

**The full text of Rep. Schakowsky's statement is below, as prepared for delivery:**

**"The tide is turning against CAFTA, because it's a bad deal for workers in North America, and a bad deal for workers in Central America. CAFTA does nothing to protect American jobs or raise labor standards in Central America. And CAFTA will hit minority populations particularly hard."**

**"My district in Illinois is one of the most diverse in the country. My constituents have already been hurt by the economic slump and by job losses due to NAFTA. They can't afford to have any more of their jobs exported. Free trade has significantly impacted the manufacturing industry, which has a disproportionately high number of minority workers. Minority unemployment rates today are higher and wages are lower. And if more jobs go South, my constituents will be left behind."**

**"Constituents in my district have relatives in Central America. They know their family members need help. It's dangerous in some Central American countries to organize a union. Environmental protections are lacking and pollution is largely unregulated. Central Americans need help, but CAFTA isn't the kind of help they need."**

**"As the richest nation in the history of the world, the U.S. has the power to help build a sustainable middle class in Central America and an expanded market for our goods. But because CAFTA lacks labor and environmental protections, it will do little to raise Central Americans out of poverty. Wages, working conditions, and quality of life will stagnate or decline for Central Americans under CAFTA as they did for Mexican workers under NAFTA. And more American companies will shift their jobs South to profit from these low-wage workers."**

**"I visited Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, on a trip organized by Congresswoman Kaptur, on the tenth anniversary of NAFTA. In Mexico, I saw the effect of NAFTA on Mexican workers. Instead of finding a thriving Mexican middle class, I found workers living in the packing crates of the products that they were manufacturing. In many cases, they worked for American companies."**

**"Where are the priorities of this trade agreement? CAFTA has more intellectual property protections than it does labor protections for American and Central American workers. Trade with these Central American countries would account for less than one percent of U.S. trade. This agreement will protect multinational corporations at the expense of workers and families. We should renegotiate CAFTA to protect human capital like it does goods and services."**