

JULY 24, 2003

**SCHAKOWSKY STANDS UP FOR AMERICAN WORKERS AND OPPOSES TRADE AGREEMENTS THAT WILL DESTROY JOBS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today issued the following statement in opposition to the U.S. - Chile and U.S. - Singapore free trade agreements:

"I rise to join my colleagues, concerned Americans, environmentalists and the unions that represent the hard working people of America in opposition to the U.S.-Chile and U.S.-Singapore free trade agreements. These agreements do not represent the best interests of U.S. working men and women. That is why these agreements are opposed by the following unions: The International Brotherhood of Teamsters; The AFL-CIO; International Brotherhood of Boilermakers; International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW); United Auto Workers (UAW); United Steel Workers of America (USWA) UNITE, (of which I am a proud member); and The Machinists Union.

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I share the concerns of men and women in labor. We know from the NAFTA experience that trade agreements that do not make labor standards and protection of U.S. jobs a priority, will hurt our economy and our workforce. We know and working families in this country know that trade agreements have not created jobs. Over 412, 000 U.S. workers lost their jobs as a result of NAFTA.

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The unemployment rate in my state, Illinois, is up to 6.3 percent. Since January 2001, we have lost 143,600 jobs in Illinois-over 70, 000 of them from the manufacturing sector.

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There is never a good time to pass legislation that costs American workers their jobs. But, now is about the worst possible time for us to consider passage of trade legislation that will ship jobs abroad, cost farmers, or force U.S. workers to accept pay cuts or givebacks in order to compete with poorly-compensated foreign workers.

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Today, President Bush, to the astonishment of men and women in labor and many of us in Congress, is embarking on an economic tour.

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I am not sure how he plans to spin the economic nosedive under his watch.

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Unless the administration measures success by how many Americans are laid off each month, then President Bush cannot truly be proud of his performance. Since taking office, 3.2 million Americans have lost their jobs and the numbers are growing. The President is pledging that his economic plans will create over one million new jobs - but that would still be a net loss of 2.2 million jobs.

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In order to just make up the over 3.2 million jobs he has already cost our country since

taking office, he will need to help create 188, 235 jobs a month for the next 17 months-the remainder of his term. And, in the unlikely event that he accomplishes that task, he will simply have broken even. If he doesn't at least break even, he will be the first U.S. President since Hoover to finish his term with a net loss in jobs.

He is threatening overtime, the 40-hour work week, and workplace safety. So, forgive me if I do not trust this President and his Administration when they tell us their policies will help our workforce. They have not earned my trust or the trust of American workers. And now he is promoting more trade deals that will cost jobs.

And like NAFTA, each of these agreements will threaten the American workforce. They will set the stage for other, broader agreements that will have even more profound negative effects on our economy and our suffering job market.

The Chile and Singapore Trade Agreements set a dangerous precedent for the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). If passed, these agreements will put the United States on record as being indifferent to the gross violations of human and labor rights that we know occur everyday in Central America. They will send us down the slippery slope to even greater economic damage.

These trade agreements would not only result in job losses here at home, but would do nothing to ensure workplace standards and environmental protections elsewhere. Under the agreements, Chile and Singapore would be allowed to set labor and environmental laws below international standards in order to attract investment.

And just like NAFTA, corporations in Chile and Singapore would have the right to challenge environmental, health, labor and other public interest measures in this country on the grounds that these protections infringe on their profits.

Exploiting workers in other countries is bad enough. But, for the first time, these agreements will allow for U.S. companies to exploit foreign workers here in the United States. The agreements create new immigration provisions that allow U.S. corporations to import foreign workers to the U.S. to do Blue and White collar jobs here in this country. But the agreements do not include prevailing wage requirements and other critical labor rights guarantees, without which those workers will be exploited and U.S. workers' rights will be undercut. And because these foreign workers will be able to extend their stay here in this country indefinitely, the damage will be long lasting.

It is clear who the winners and losers would be under these trade agreements - big business interests would trample workers and labor rights, public health and environmental protections. That is why it is shameful that the Bush Administration is willing to risk American jobs, look the other way when labor rights are abused and ignore environmental protections all in the name of profits for their corporate friends. Congress and the President must side with hard working Americans.