



News From Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis 32nd Congressional District of California

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Statement of Congresswoman Solis Opposing CAFTA

WASHINGTON, DC—Today, Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis released the following statement on today's signing of the United States Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA):

“The Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) will mean more job loss and wage decline for American workers. In signing CAFTA, the Bush Administration has ignored the mistakes of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and granted a gift to corporate interests who prioritize access to cheap labor, not protecting working families in the United States and Central America. At a time of record unemployment, we should be protecting U.S. jobs, not exporting them.

“I am not opposed to trade; I support *fair trade*. We need to level the playing field and enact trade agreements that include meaningful labor and environment standards that will prevent the exporting of U.S. jobs and the exploitation of workers abroad. Our trade policies should lift people out of poverty, not keep them in it.

“Ten years ago, NAFTA proponents promised increased wages and economic development in the United States, Mexico, and Canada and decreased migration. The agreement has failed on all accounts. Over 750,000 jobs in the United States have been lost due to NAFTA and immigration to the United States has only increased.

“Inadequate free trade agreements not only hurt the United States, they also hurt our neighbors. I have visited Mexico and seen firsthand the devastating consequences of NAFTA. In the *maquiladora* zone in Ciudad Juarez and other border cities, wages are low, union organizing is suppressed, and industrial pollution jeopardizes the health of workers and residents. Now, those same U.S. jobs that were exported to Mexico are being sent to China, leaving the economic situation in many areas of Mexico worse than before NAFTA.

“CAFTA is nothing more than NAFTA-plus, an extension of a failed trade agreement to a region that turns a blind eye to internationally-recognized labor and environmental safeguards. As in Mexico with NAFTA, CAFTA would cause the loss of family farms and lure more workers, most of them women, to work in the *maquiladoras* in the trade export zones, where working conditions are unimaginable to the American public.

“As the only Member of Congress of Central American descent, I understand the importance of supporting efforts to promote sustainable development and preservation of the agricultural sector in that region. However, United States policy towards Latin America should go beyond free

como resultado de NAFTA se están acabando y ahora China esta supliendo la mano de obra barata – empeorando la situación económica en muchas áreas de México.

“CAFTA no es nada mas que una replica de NAFTA, una extensión de un tratado de libre comercio fracasado, que ignora completamente las protecciones laborales y de medio ambiente que son reconocidas internacionalmente. Como en México con NAFTA, CAFTA causará la ruina de haciendas o ranchos familiares y atraerá a más personas, en su mayoría mujeres, a trabajar en las maquilas ubicadas en las zonas comerciales de exportación; lugares en los cuales las condiciones laborales son inconcebibles.

“Como la única Representante del Congreso Estadounidense de origen Centroamericano, entiendo la importancia de apoyar esfuerzos que promueven un desarrollo sostenible y la conservación del sector agropecuario en esa región. No obstante, la política de los Estados Unidos hacia Latinoamérica debe tener como objetivo aumentar los salarios y mejorar las condiciones laborales y la calidad de vida de las personas. Los Estados Unidos debe invertir mas en programas que realmente ayudan a Latinoamérica, tales como la Fundación Inter-Americana (IAF) por sus siglas en inglés, una organización que promueve los pequeños negocios, la independencia económica, y los principios democráticos, así como el progreso económico para las personas necesitadas en Latino América y el Caribe.

“CAFTA es la propuesta errónea para trabajadores Americanos y para Centroamérica. Como miembro de la Coalición de Labor y Familias Trabajadoras, haré todo lo posible para que el Congreso no apruebe CAFTA.”