

NEWS FROM CONGRESSWOMAN MARCY KAPTUR

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Kaptur Calls NAFTA Expansion A Recipe for More Job Losses

Ohio Lawmaker Announces Plans to Lead Congressional Delegation to Mexico Next Month

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur (OH-9) said today that expanding NAFTA to Central America will result in the loss of more jobs in the United States without improving the standard of living for workers in some of the hemisphere's poorest countries. The 11-term Ohio lawmaker made her comments as meetings convened today in Houston on the proposed Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

Congresswoman Kaptur announced that she will lead a congressional delegation to Mexico in November to examine the disastrous effects that NAFTA has had on working families on both sides of the border.

Kaptur, who previously visited Mexico in 1993, before the passage of NAFTA, will return to Mexico ten years later along with representatives from the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

"As the Bush administration works to extend NAFTA to the rest of Latin America through the proposed CAFTA and Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) agreements, there has never been a more crucial time to draw attention to the human face of this infamous agreement," said Kaptur.

"Unemployment in the U.S. has surpassed 6 percent, and 9 million Americans are out of work," said Kaptur, a leader in the fight against NAFTA during the debate in the early nineties. "The flawed NAFTA model has meant a loss of hundreds of thousands of good, high-paying American jobs which were exported to Mexico and other low-wage nations. Expanding this agreement in the form of CAFTA and the FTAA are evidence of this administration's abysmal management of the economy."

As American jobs have moved to Mexico, Mexican exports to the U.S. have increased. Free trade in Mexico, though, has not been a model for sustainable development to export to the rest of the region. Twelve million more Mexicans have fallen into poverty since NAFTA was implemented, and real wages have fallen to an all-time low. Maquiladora workers still fight for basic labor rights, and agricultural employment in Mexico is in crisis because crashing commodity prices have destroyed the rural economy.

"CAFTA's labor standards represent a step backwards for US trade policy in Central America," remarked Kaptur, who has long lobbied President Bush and Mexican President

Fox for an intercontinental labor agreement to protect workers on both sides of the border.

"Current law governing U.S. trade with Central America requires that most countries enforce internationally recognized labor standards so they may enjoy market access benefits. But CAFTA will not protect a Central American worker's freedom of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, to refuse forced labor, to reject child labor and to work free from discrimination," Kaptur said.

Kaptur will visit Mexico November 14th through 17th with a congressional delegation and U.S. labor leaders. They will visit the border region, tour communities in the heart of Mexico, and then meet up with workers at the FTAA ministerial meetings in Miami.

"We need a trade policy that puts our accounts in order and respects working families both in the United States and the nations with whom we trade," Kaptur said.