

Stop CAFTA Action Packet Introduction

The US-Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DRCAFTA) is a trade pact between the United States, the Dominican Republic, and five countries of Central America: Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and El Salvador.* The agreement is in effect an extension of the seriously flawed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that was implemented in January of 1994.

CAFTA talks were completed in December of 2003 – Costa Rica was added in January of 2004 and the DR in August of 2004. We expect the Bush administration to submit the required legislation to implement CAFTA to Congress sometime between April and June of 2005 – but possibly sooner.

As part of our campaign to defeat CAFTA in Congress, the Stop CAFTA Coalition is working with local activists to organize lobby visits during congressional home district work periods – the dates are listed below. In addition, we are mobilizing for a coordinated National Week of Action during the February recess (February 201-25). The goal is to mobilize grassroots pressure on individual members of Congress through direct lobbying, popular education, demonstrations, and media work. The dates for the recess weeks are:

February 21-25 Presidents' Day Home district work period – National Week of Action

March 21-April 1: Spring District Work Period

May 30- June 3: Memorial Day District Work Period

Note there will also be a coordinated global Week of Action April 10-16.

This packet contains information to assist local groups in preparing for these weeks of actions. Inside you will find:

- a guide to grassroots lobbying,
- a list of creative ideas for your local coalition,
- a media workshop to help you get the most out of any actions you plan,
- tips for raising CAFTA during congressional campaigns and
- a variety of sample materials (letters to the editor, letters to congress, flyers, skit for street theatre, etc...).

The packet contains some talking points – 10 Reasons to Oppose CAFTA. For more detailed information on the agreement itself visit the web sites listed in the CAFTA Resources section. If downloading this packet from the stopcafta.org web site go ahead and also download the Washington Office On Latin America's educational briefing packet, which contains background on various provisions in the agreement.

Some Creative Ideas for Your Week of Action

In addition to setting up lobby visits and other direct communication with your member of congress, it may be effective to organize a more creative action that will help the coalition get some media attention, educate local folks, and be fun. Here are a few suggestions that have been tried recently.

Street Theatre... Street theatre can be a fun way to make a statement against CAFTA, and tends to draw a crowd. In the sample section is a skit "CAFTA Rodeo" that we used during a demonstration here in Washington, D.C.

Host a "5k Race to the Bottom"... Raise awareness about the 'Race to the Bottom' represented by CAFTA and other trade agreements. In previous "races to the bottom" participants have utilized puppets and goofy costumes to highlight the irony, and to raise specific concerns.

NAFTA Scavenger Hunt... Can you find a job created in your area by the North American Free Trade Agreement? Is there an empty factory that stands testament to job loss created by globalization? Make it a contest in you area to find these jobs, or closed factories.

Parade Floats... The 4th of July, Labor Day, and other holidays are great opportunities for fair trade campaigning. Make a float for your local parade. March along side handing out flyers explaining the FTAA and your representative's stance (and their phone number). If you can't make a float, how about a banner? The float/banner should have a clear message. For example, "FTAA = Layoffs." Perhaps you could find a way to dramatize whatever your message is (for instance, you could hand out mock pink slips along with the anti-FTAA literature).

Tombstones... Make cardboard tombstones and write on them the name and life spans of factories that have shut down, or the number of family farms lost. "*RIP...xxx...1980- 2002. Will be mourned for by all those who lost their jobs.*" Place the tombstones in front of a representative's district office or campaign office. If you want to go all out, hold a candlelight vigil.

Yard-signs... Make signs that say your representative's name and "we need you to take a stand for fair trade," and distribute them throughout your district. Check with your local or state AFL-CIO or affiliates to see if they have posters or signs that can be made into yard-signs. Staple two together, put on a stick and plunge it into the ground. Write on your representative's name or have name stickers printed to personalize the message. To maximize exposure, place the signs near your representative's home or office.

MTBE Lemonade Stands... Set up a lemonade stand in front of your representative's office or in a public place and have two pitchers, one of "safe" lemonade and one of icky, brown "MTBE-polluted" lemonade. (MTBE is a toxic chemical, and a California State ban of MTBE is the subject of a NAFTA Chapter 11 challenge) Hand out literature, gather signatures, encourage people to make calls. The following states have banned MTBE: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, S. Dakota, Washington. Legislation is still pending in: Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Texas. In Indiana, MTBE has been found in the drinking water.

Banner Drops... From a bridge or outside of a downtown office window, hang a large banner that says something like, "Tell ___ to vote No on X Trade Agreement xxx-xxxx."

GRASSROOTS LOBBY TOOLKIT

I. DIFFERING FORMS OF CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE

Congressional pressure will play a critical role in whether or not we defeat CAFTA. Sometimes, all that is needed to convince a Representative to take a stand is to ask (subtly demand) that s/he do so; at other times we must force him/her to do so through grassroots political pressure. In this instance, there will be very strong pressure from groups that support this treaty. Even if your representative has voted against Fast Track and claims that s/he will vote against other free trade legislation in the future, it is still vital to maintain political pressure. By maintaining such pressure we send our representatives a clear message: your constituents do not want CAFTA, there is no room for a change of heart.

There are many different ways to express to our Representatives our opposition to CAFTA and to pressure them to vote NO! Among the most widely used tactics are:

- Writing letters/emails/postcards
- Phone calls
- Congressional Visits
- Hounding

All of these tactics can be carried out in a diverse number of ways. Which tactics you use to carry out your strategy will depend on the conditions particular to your locale.

II. CONGRESSIONAL VISIT “HOW TO” KIT

A. SETTING UP THE MEETING

Call the District Office – When you call your legislator's office, ask to speak with the person who handles the legislator's schedule. Tell the scheduler the date and time you would like to meet with your legislator (be flexible) and the general topics you wish to discuss. For visits to the Local Office, seek appointments during congressional recess periods (listed in section IV) when your Member returns to your district. Let the scheduler know that the meeting should take no longer than one hour. If there is more than one person attending the meeting, let the scheduler know their names and affiliations. If someone in your group knows the legislator personally or professionally, make sure that the scheduler is aware of the relationship.

Congressional visits in Washington DC – Remember that most legislative business occurs Tuesday through Thursday and that the closing days of a session are extra busy. When you arrive in Washington, call the Member's office to confirm your appointment.

Be persistent – The objective of this initial contact is to secure a time and date to meet with your representative. Be persistent yet polite, and make it clear that YOU, the Member's constituent, are the most important person (s)he will ever listen to. Lots of

times it can be hard to get a meeting, but persistence will generally be rewarded with a meeting with your representative.

Meet with *somebody* – If your Member of Congress can't meet with you, visit the staff member who works on the issues that most concern you. For most issues relating to Central America and CAFTA, you will want to meet with the foreign policy and trade staffers. Usually that person will be based in Washington DC, but there will also be an aide in the local office who can meet with you. Try to meet with the highest ranking aide possible in the local office, i.e.: the Senior Aide.

Confirm your appointment – After you schedule a meeting, send a confirmation letter that includes a list of those who will attend the meeting.

B. PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

Research your representative – You can use the Congressional Directory: www.congress.org, www.house.gov, www.senate.gov . Just punch in your zip code and the site provides you with contact information and a web page for your Member of Congress. You will be able to find biographical information, committee and subcommittee assignments, and key issues of concern for your Member. Review your legislator's voting record and any publicly stated views or opinions. The Stop CAFTA website (www.stopcafta.org) can provide trade related voting histories.

Determine your agenda and goals for the meeting – Coalition members should meet before the meeting with the Member in order to determine the agenda and delegate agenda items to be raised. Have different people cover different issues, but have one person act as a facilitator for the discussion and deliver the bulk of your message.

Bring it all back home – All legislators supposedly want to improve the economy and quality of life in their district/state. It is your job to convince them that free trade agreements such as CAFTA have negative impacts on working people in all the signing countries, including people in their own congressional district.

Make sure everyone in your group is prepared – Be certain everyone agrees on the central message and what will be asked of the legislator. This way you will avoid a possible internal debate in front of your legislator. Don't feel that you have to be an expert. Most representatives of Congress are generalists. Be open to counter-arguments, but don't get stuck on them. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Nothing is worse than being caught in a lie or inaccuracy. Offer to look into the question and get back to the Member (this is also an excellent opportunity to stay in touch).

Prepare an information packet to leave with your legislator – This should include information on your organization including the group's contact information, as well as a description of your objectives. You should also leave a business card with the receptionist.

C. CONDUCTING THE MEETING

Be on time, listen well, and don't stay too long – *Be on time!* Introduce yourself and say what issues and legislation you want to discuss. However, make sure that all

introductions are kept brief allowing more time for conversation with the representative.

Listen well! You will hear occasional indications of your representative's actual views, and you should take those opportunities to provide good information.

Don't stay too long! Try to get closure on the issues you discuss but leave room to continue the discussion at another time.

Build the relationship – If your representative has supported your coalition's positions in the past, be sure to thank him/her; if the opposite is true, consider that your visit may prevent more active opposition in the future, and perhaps even result in a surprising good vote on an important issue.

Remember: This meeting shouldn't be an end in itself. Think of it as the beginning of a relationship with your representative that will allow you to voice your opinion on topics in the future. With this in mind, make sure the relationship you build is a positive one, based on respect. Try not to be hostile.

Take notes – Make sure someone in your group takes notes on what is said during the meeting. However, don't use any recording devices. These notes should be circulated to the entire group after the meeting, as well as shared with others.

Ask his or her position – How will s/he vote? Do party leaders have positions on the issue? What is their influence likely to be? Is the office hearing from opponents? If so, what are their arguments and what groups are involved? Does the Member know any other key House Members or Senators who should be contacted to get favorable action on the bill? Is s/he willing to facilitate contact?

Ask for specific action – Always ask for specific actions; always get a specific commitment and then follow up. No matter how supportive or unsupportive your legislator is, there is always a next step. Call into your organization's central office, or visit the Stop CAFTA website to find out what specific action should be sought at the time of your meeting.

Provide Affirmation Where Possible – Look for areas of agreement and affirm them. Convey your appreciation for positive steps, no matter how small. Keep written records of meetings. Take notes for use in future contacts. What did you request? What was the response? What was promised? What are the chief areas of interest?

Thank your representative – Always begin your meeting by thanking your legislator for taking the time to visit with you. If your legislator has been supportive of our stance on free trade and social and economic justice, you should thank him/her for his/her support as well.

Follow up – Send thank you notes after the meeting to the representative, staff, or receptionist, and if commitments were made during the meeting, repeat your understanding of them.

III. TIMELINE

The process of consideration for CAFTA will begin with President Bush declaring an "intent to sign." He will then submit to Congress "implementing legislation" which will change US laws in accordance with the treaty. This will initiate the 90 day window during which Congress will have to consider and vote on the decree. We expect the White House to declare its "intent to sign" sometime in February.

With this in mind we believe that **opposition must be raised and come to a point by late April**. The House of Representatives will be the main battle-ground for this legislation, so we have decided to concentrate our efforts there. However, we encourage you to meet with any and all of your representatives, including Senators.

Below is a Congressional calendar, which lets you know when your representative will be in his/her Local Office. It is important that you act now to reserve a meeting during these brief windows. When possible, we also encourage visits to representative's Washington, DC Offices.

The above information about conducting a congressional visit was provided by:

NISGUA, Legislative Policy Work:

http://www.nisgua.org/G.A.P/legislative_policy_work.htm

Public Citizen, Grassroots Primer for Congressional District Office Visit:

<http://www.citizen.org/trade/fasttrack/action/articles.cfm?ID=5534>

Grassroots Advocacy Training Exchange, A Perfect Capitol Hill Visit:

<http://grassroots-advocacy.com/visitf.html>

American Arts Alliance, Grassroots Legislative Kit:

<http://www.americanartsalliance.org/grasskit/grasskit-index.html>

CISPES, Guide To Grass Roots Congressional Pressure:

http://www.cispes.org/english/Campaign_Against_CAFTA_FTAA/Organizing_Materials.htm

MEDIA WORKSHOP

It will be important to try to get press coverage of any major events that happen during your week of action. This could include a press conference with local labor leaders, delivery of petitions to your member of congress, or demonstrations/direct actions taken to raise awareness about CAFTA. Below are some tips provided by organizations with some experience in this area. As always, these tips should be amended to suit local reality and any already existing relationships your coalition may have with the press.

How to Deliver a Message in the Media

[Adapted from the Western Organization of Resource Councils (www.worc.org)]

Citizens' groups need newspaper, TV and radio coverage of their stories to be effective. A story at the top of the evening news or on the front page boosts morale and can help a group win on an issue its members care about. A negative story or a hostile editorial can undermine a campaign.

Why do you want media coverage?

Before you spend a lot of your organization's time and resources on a major media campaign, stop and think about why you want media coverage. You want:

- The public to know arguments and facts that support your position on an issue.

- People to hear about and join your group.

- To pressure the governor, a company or some other decision-maker to act.

- To publicize upcoming events or a fundraiser.

There are also stories you don't want in the news:

- Stories on an issue on which your group has no position or is divided.

- Stories about conflicts within your group.

- Stories about your losses.

- You may not want stories about your internal strategy discussions.

- You may not want stories about sensitive negotiations with your opponents.

Media coverage is one tool, a part of your strategy to win on issues and build your group. It is not an end in itself. Citizens' groups have fewer resources for public relations campaigns than do many of their corporate and government opponents. If you focus only on media coverage, and neglect the other parts of running good issue campaigns and maintaining a strong organization, you're bound to lose in the end.

Who is the media?

Many citizens' groups spend most of their time and effort to get reporters to cover their stories in their local daily newspaper. Stories in the daily paper will be read by a lot of people in your town, probably including most opinion-makers and decision-makers, and your members.

Newspaper clippings are useful to send out in mailings to donors and members to reinforce good feelings about your group. Some other places to get your message into the daily paper are read just as much, or more, than the front page: editorials, opinion columns, and letters to the editor are obvious examples, but don't forget calendars, the business page, photos and cartoons.

The daily paper is not the only source of print news. In many rural communities, almost everyone reads weekly papers, usually run by overworked people looking for good material to fill space.

Specialty publications are important to the work of any citizens' group. For example, farmers and ranchers get a lot of their news from regional and national agricultural trade publications as do farm and ranch reporters from daily newspapers. Many government regulators, business people and activists read publications like Coal Week or Inside EPA.

There is less news on the radio today than 10 or 20 years ago, but there are still a lot of opportunities to get your message on the airwaves. Noncommercial (public) radio is supported in part by state and federal funds, and has an obligation to provide news coverage. Much of the in-depth reporting is found on National Public Radio programs, but most public stations have some kind of local and regional coverage. The public radio audience is fairly small, but it includes decision-makers, the well-educated and the affluent (so it's important if that's who you want to reach). Many commercial radio stations today have just five minutes of news every couple of hours, if they have any at all, but other stations have all news-and talk formats. Radio talk shows are an important medium for citizens' groups. Local and regional shows need interesting guests and interesting topics. If you can't get your spokesperson on a radio talk show, members can call in with comments or questions. Citizens groups can get Public Service Announcements (PSA's), free broadcast of a recorded or written message on most commercial stations, especially if they concern an upcoming event, or an uncontroversial message. If you can't get free air time, radio is a relatively inexpensive place to buy advertising compared to TV.

TV time is expensive because so many people are tuned in. We may think TV news is superficial, or complain about how hard it is to get on TV news, but two-thirds of the news people get is through TV and radio (mostly TV). A typical nightly news-cast has twelve minutes of news. After sports, weather, and advertising is accounted for, there is time for at most a dozen stories. But if you need to reach the general public, you need to get on TV.

There are opportunities besides the nightly news, although the audiences will be smaller: interviews on the noon news, special news talk shows (local versions of "Face the Nation") TV PSA's, and community service announcements. There are opportunities on public TV, as well. And most cable systems have local access channels, which give your group an opportunity to have its own show.

Today, millions of people get all kinds of information through their computer, the Internet, and the World Wide Web. The potential is huge, but a couple of cautionary notes: it's almost impossible to make sure that any of the potential viewers, who are all over the world, will see the message you put out. If you need to reach people without computers and modems, the Internet isn't much help.

To get your message covered by the media, your strategy must be based on an understanding of whatever media sources you are targeting. Spend time reading papers and magazines, listening to the radio stations and watching the TV shows you want to cover your story. What are the

Twelve Ways to Get Your Story Out

There's more than one way to tell a story. One under-used strategy is to break a story in your own newsletter. If a reporter picks up a story from your newsletter, you get your story covered and build the credibility of your newsletter at the same time. You make your newsletter a more exciting publication to read.

Some other ways to deliver your message in the media:

- * Hold a press conference or a media event.
- * Radio talk shows: members call in, or field calls as guests.
- * Write letters to the editor.
- * Meet with editorial boards, request a supporting editorial.
- * Submit guest editorials (long letter to the editor, with pictures).
- * Ask reporters to attend and cover a meeting, event or action.
- * Call newspapers, TV or radio and offer to be interviewed.
- * Provide background information, sources to a reporter (give them an exclusive).
- * Cultivate a reporter's interest in a feature story: a "human interest" piece, or more in-depth analysis of an interesting issue.
- * Prepare newsworthy quotes or sound bites to deliver at a public meeting, hearing or event organized by someone else.
- * Prepare a spokesperson for special TV or radio news programs.

formats of the stories they run? What kinds of stories do they run? Who owns the media outlets in your community? Who are the reporters? If you can answer these questions, and build relationships with the people who report and package the news, you are ready to develop your strategy for getting heard in the media.

Newspapers, radio and TV stations are businesses. Reporters, editors, and news directors are all as busy as you are. They may get hundreds of press releases in a day. A good media strategy makes it easy for them to run your story, by providing credible, clear, newsworthy and professional material.

Planning a media strategy

The first step in developing a plan to work with the media is to be clear about your objectives. What is it you want? What is the goal of your issue campaign or your membership drive? Once that is clear, there are four basic parts to any sound media strategy: developing your message, defining your audience, deciding who will deliver your message, and deciding how they will deliver your message.

The message: Given your goal, what is the message you want to send? Do you want people to understand more about the problem your group is concerned about? Do you want them to understand what you want done about it? Do you want to undermine your opponent's credibility? Do you want people to support your position by signing a petition, making a call or signing a letter?

The audience: Who needs to see your message to make your campaign successful? We often assume we need to reach the general public, but that's not always true. It takes a lot more time and resources to send a message to everyone (even everyone in your state) than to send a message to farmers in your state, or legislators, or the Director of the State Highway Department. If you do want to send a message to the general public, is it everyone in the U.S., or in your state, or in your town? The better you can target your audience, the easier and more effective your media strategy will be.

The messenger & the medium: You have your message and audience; now you need to decide who will deliver it, and how. Who will be your most effective spokesperson? Most citizens groups rely on their president or chairperson, or the head of a committee, to represent their group, because they have the most credibility with the audience and reporters.

You should also think about who is the most interesting spokesperson. If your message is about cleaning up air pollution, someone with health problems caused by poor air quality is a more interesting spokesperson. Hold a press conference above the town looking down on a hazy view, or in front of a medical facility that treats respiratory illnesses.

If you want to let lots of people know about several arguments and facts that support your position, the most effective strategy may be to get several members to write letters to the editor or call in on radio talk shows. Letters to the editor are among the most widely-read words in a newspaper, and more likely to reach your audience than half-a-dozen press releases.

Press releases should be attractively designed and professionally prepared, because reporters will have to pick it out from dozens of others. Think and write as much like a reporter as you can. Write in the third person; express opinions by quoting a spokesperson.

Keep it short. Double-space it. The most important part of a good press release is the follow-up. Call the reporter, find out if they got the press release, and ask them if they need any other information. Make sure they understand what you think is newsworthy about your story.

A follow-up call will help you even if the reporter doesn't cover your story, because you can usually find out why. If the reporter says he can't use your release, don't hang up in a huff. Ask what would make it more interesting and newsworthy.

Ten tips to getting your story covered

Know the reporters.
Know the media.
Know your message & audience.
Prepare with person who will deliver it.
Make it easy for the reporter.
Know what's newsworthy.
Keep it simple; explain the story.
Find the angle: pocketbook, etc.
Be persistent.
Make media strategy part of your campaign.

For more information on the Western Organization of Resource Council, including many more detailed How To's on the media visit their web site at www.worc.org

TIPS ON PLANNING A PRESS CONFERENCE/EVENT

[Adapted from Public Citizen, Global Trade Watch]

There is no guaranteed formula to a successful press conference, but some things help. Below are some tips, but the most important factor to get good coverage is for the point of your news conference (message) to coincide with an issue that is on the media's radar (timing).

FIELD

The Venue: find venue and scout it out. Is there parking nearby, many entrances etc? If inside, a small room is better than a large room. Know how the room is set-up (a podium, sound system, good place to hang a banner). If the event is outside, be sure there's space for people to gather, what the best angle is for visuals? Decide on the time of the event.

The Venue appendix: also think about media accessibility. An abandoned warehouse on the outskirts of town may make for good symbolism if the message is about jobs lost, but it may be a logistical nightmare for reporters to get there. As always, it's a judgement call for the organizers.

The Crowd: set a goal for how many people are realistic. Reach out for other organizations in your area, and ask them for lists of contacts. From your lists, organize volunteers (or form some kind of a system) to reach out for more people. Volunteers should call through the lists the weekend before event (or in the case of recess maybe the week before the event and then reminder calls the following week?). Collect e-mails of people to remain in contact until the event, but it is always good to connect over the phone as much as possible. Half the number of people confirmed to be at an event is a good gauge of how many will actually show up.

The Speakers: confirm the speakers and get quotes from them. Figure out the line-up and who will be host/emcee. Make master list of all speakers' contact information, including cell phones

Message: make sure all confirmed speakers know what they are going to say, so one does not repeat what another says. A good way of avoiding this is to ask speakers to keep their remarks to a certain amount of time (in minutes, of course).

Materials: Make props, posters, etc. a couple of nights before hand. Make copies of report when applicable. Are there other related materials you should hand out? Make copies.

MEDIA

Reporters: Call from your existing press lists. Or, if you're without a list, call the newspapers and begin a list. Tell an editor what your event is and who might cover something like it. You may be transferred to numerous editors, but stay persistent until you get the right person on the phone. Remember that generally speaking editors & reporters have a little more time to take "cold" calls earlier in the day as, they're not on a deadline then. Best to call between 9-11 a.m.

Get to know your local Associated Press reporters. When you have an event, call them even before you have an advisory. When you have the "Who, What, When, Where" ask the AP to put your event on the DAYBOOK. This is read by all newspaper editors in your region. Similarly, you may have a Reuters reporter in your area. If so, Reuters also has a daybook. Get press release and media advisory finalized and OK-ed by the speakers at least three days before the event. Don't underestimate the time this will take when multiple groups are involved.

Fax and email out the press advisory to reporters two days before the event (if event is Weds, fax out advisory Monday). Follow-up with phone calls to reporters at print, radio and T.V. stations the morning you send out the advisory and the day before the event.

Fax the advisory again on the morning of the event and do another round of follow up calls to get final confirmation for the event (hint: call T.V. stations before 9 am since they have meetings to decide what they will do each day at this time and you want your event on their radar BEFORE their morning meeting).

If for a newspaper it sounds to you unlikely a reporter will come out, call the Photo Editor or Photo Desk and ask if they can send a photographer to the event. Sometimes pictures are better than stories anyway.

Send out the press release after the event to all reporters on your list (both the ones who did show and the ones who did not). Assign someone who can walk through the statehouse and distribute the press release and other materials to the press offices

Have sign-in sheet for press

If reporters you talked with on the phone do not make it out to your event, stay in touch with them and let them know of other opportunities they may be able to write on the subject. More often than not, reporters would like to cover more than they can and take orders from an editor who may have other priorities. But staying in good contact with the reporter is worthwhile because sooner or later, they will need you to write a story.

CAFTA Resources

There is a rapidly expanding pool of literature and activist oriented materials on the Central America Free Trade Agreement. Below is a guide to direct you to some of these resources. Many of the web sites below are updated frequently.

Useful web sites.

www.stopcafta.org

This is the web site of the Stop CAFTA coalition, which is a network of solidarity and human rights activists with many years of collective experience working with the people of Central America. Through this web site we will be coordinating our national efforts against the agreement. There are links for local events around the country, local contacts already working on the agreement, and information on the content of the agreement and the voting process in congress.

www.cispes.org

The web site of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES). The CISPES site contains a great deal of useful activist information, fact sheets, and news reports, particularly on the movement in El Salvador. There is some bi-lingual information, including flyers and fact sheets that are very helpful. This is the place to go to sign the People's Declaration on Free Trade.

www.quixote.org/CAFTA

The Web site of the Quixote Center program Quest for Peace. The resource center will link you to many other sites for information on the agreement. Also includes an up to date list of opinion pieces, news articles, congressional actions and official information.

www.citizenstrade.org

The activist resource center has many, many tools to help local trade activists. The Citizen's Trade Campaign has been one of the leaders in the struggle against the Free Trade Area of the Americas. The general resources on organizing and lobbying are invaluable to local coalitions.

Sample Materials

Sample Letter to your Congressperson

[Your Local Coalition Name and Address Here,
e.g., Local Fair Trade Coalition, etc.]

[Office of Representative _____]
[District Office Address]
[City, State, Zip]

Month & Date, 2004

Dear Congressman _____,

I am writing to you out of great concern about the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

This agreement will be presented to you for an up or down vote (Fast Track) this coming spring or summer. Undeniably trade between nations is good. It is the terms of this agreement that I question.

The US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick tells us that free trade with Central America is the road to development in that region, and a boon to economic growth in our own country, the United States. This sounds like a winning policy. But the people who will be most affected by this treaty (small farmers, small business owners, union workers, and poor women) have a very different take. Before you vote on this trade agreement consider the following questions and arguments and tell me where you stand.

Can trade between unequal partners be fair?

The US has the advantage of years of industrialization and productive growth, not to mention billions of dollars worth of agricultural and industrial subsidies. In contrast, the agriculturally based Central American nations are still working with oxen pulled plows. Trade liberalization in Central America has been proceeding piecemeal over the past decade, and the results have not been encouraging. Trade growth has failed to produce a reduction in poverty, faster economic growth, or increased democratization. Instead, it has brought rising levels of impoverishment, criminal violence, social and political instability and a hollowing out of democracy.

Is NAFTA a good model?

NAFTA, the forefather of CAFTA, has meant increased trade for Mexico; in fact, commerce in Mexico has more than tripled since 1994. However, in Mexico increased trade has not meant real economic growth. Poverty has increased from 50.9% in 1994 to 58.4% in 2001. And while economic reports show that productivity is up, wages are down by about 21%. In the rural sector, the official number of unoccupied workers quadrupled between 1993 and 2000, growing to over 2.5 million workers. This statistic doesn't reflect the 1.8 million workers who abandoned the rural sector altogether during this period. The same story is being told for small farmers in the US, who are unable to compete with the monopolizing force of subsidized agri-business. If NAFTA is our model, we can predict that Central America will be a big loser.

What is the cost of mass migration from South to North?

Last year 300,000 - 400,000 Central Americans fled north towards the US. They come because they can't earn enough to eat in their own countries. Some experts even suggest that the Central American governments are encouraging this movement North in hopes of swelling their national income with US dollars loyally sent back as remittances to family members. CAFTA will unquestionably increase the number of Central American workers who take flight to the US. As you know, the risks and challenges of this forced migration are great for both the immigrants and the US cities that receive them.

Do unequal labor laws and low wages lead to a race to the bottom?

Since NAFTA we have seen millions of jobs flow from North to South as businesses seek cheaper labor. But lower wages is not the only incentive. Foreign investment is also taking advantage of weak labor laws, enforcement procedures, and local opposition to unionizing. To protect workers on both sides of the border, any trade agreement must include parity of enforcement for all labor laws.

Has there been true representation at the negotiating table or is it heavily weighted towards large-scale business interests?

Genuine input and participation in the negotiations by civil society groups in the U.S. and the five Central American countries was non-existent. At the same time, the U.S. Business Roundtable and financial elites in Central America had constant access to their governments' negotiation teams and trade ministers. The negotiations were defined by a complete lack of transparency; not only have negotiators kept the most controversial information from the public, but also from the members of the Congressional Oversight Group (COG) for CAFTA. This process has been antithetical to democracy.

There is too much at stake. CAFTA will devastate the Central American rural sector, cause mass unemployment in the region, and increase the gap between the rich and poor. It will also result in the further marginalization of the small American farmer, encourage industries to take their jobs to countries that fail at the most base levels of labor regulation, and create even greater stresses on the American infrastructure as growing numbers of immigrants are pushed north from Central America.

For these reasons, I implore you to **vote No on CAFTA.**

Sincerely,

**SAMPLE CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE VISIT SCHEDULING
LETTER FOR OLD MEMBERS**
[Thanks to Citizen's Trade Campaign]

[Your Local Coalition Name and Address Here,
e.g., Local Fair Trade Coalition, etc.]

[District Office Scheduler]
[Office of Representative _____]
[District Office Address]
[City, State, Zip]

Month & Date, 2004

Dear [Name of Scheduler]:

On behalf of the [local coalition's name] I would like to request a meeting to discuss the Representative's perspectives and positions -- and the concerns of this coalition -- relating to international trade policy.

The [XXX group] is [brief description including a listing of coalition members].

We are eager to sit down with the Congresswoman/man as soon as possible to discuss the impacts of trade and investment treaties upon this congressional district, as well as nationally and internationally. In particular we would like to discuss issues relating to the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). As concerned citizens and voters, we are eager to discuss Representative _____'s positions on these issues and look forward to working with him/her.

The meeting should last no longer than one hour.

Participants in the meeting will include [list participants]. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions or comments feel free to contact me at [local contact information here].

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

**SAMPLE CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE VISIT SCHEDULING
LETTER FOR NEW MEMBERS
[Thanks to Citizen's Trade Campaign]**

[Your Local Coalition Name and Address Here,
e.g., Local Fair Trade Coalition, etc.]

[District Office Scheduler]
[Office of Representative _____]
[District Office Address]
[City, State, Zip]

Month & Date, 2004

Dear [Name of Scheduler]:

On behalf of the [local coalition's name], I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Representative _____ on His/Her election to Congress. Also, we would like to request a meeting to discuss the Representative's perspectives and positions -- and the concerns of this coalition -- relating to international trade policy.

The [XXX group] is [brief description including a listing of coalition members].

We are eager to sit down with the Congresswoman/man as soon as possible to discuss the impacts of trade and investment treaties upon this congressional district, as well as nationally and internationally. In particular we would like to discuss issues relating to the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). As concerned citizens and voters, we are eager to discuss Representative _____'s positions on these issues and look forward to working with him/her.

The meeting should last no longer than one hour. Participants in the meeting will include [list participants].

On behalf of the [name of coalition], I would again like to congratulate the Representative on his/her election, and look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions or comments feel free to contact me at [local contact information here].

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

10 Reasons to Oppose CAFTA

[Adapted from CISPEs www.cispes.org]

1. If passed, CAFTA would advance the passing of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and other efforts to expand the seriously flawed North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) model.
2. The agreement would erase current laws that mandate enforcement of core international labor standards for our trading partners, and replace them with an obligation to merely enforce existing laws – with no baseline commitment to respect international labor standards.
3. Expanding corporate led “free trade” would make the Global South more dependent on the Global North and transnational corporate interests.
4. By legislating a permanent state of “structural adjustment,” CAFTA would diminish the power of Central American countries to regulate their own economies and protect their own citizens.
5. CAFTA would force Central American countries to open their markets to the US, even as the US government continues to subsidize corporate agriculture and pharmaceuticals.
6. CAFTA would lead to further privatization of social services, decreasing public access to basic services. The US has demanded private access to ALL service sectors, including education, health care, telecommunications, and water.
7. It would force competition for the lowest wages and lowest production costs, which would drive wages down in the US and keep them down throughout Central America.
8. It would allow corporations to sue governments over any law that would protect national interest, including laws that protect consumers, communities, labor, and the environment, because these would be “barriers to trade,” or lost profits considered “tantamount to expropriation.” This eliminates the democratic rights of people and communities to determine how their government regulates relations with corporations.
9. Concentration of power in the hands of corporations with strong ties to right-wing governments would allow the conservative elite to maintain control over a countries economies in Central America.
10. Opposition to the agreement is widespread in Central America and growing in the United States. We need to stand up for human rights and protecting the environment.

CAFTA Rodeo

(Street Theatre From Witness for Peace)

Preparation:

Materials:

1. Rope with a lasso knot
2. Large rope to hold 5 Central American country actors
3. Signs for each Central America country with string attached to hang around actor's necks
4. Large CAFTA Scoreboard with the following "contestants" written on left-hand side:
 - Workers
 - Small Farmers
 - Food Security**
 - Indigenous People
 - Sick People
 - Democracy
5. "Loser" signs to post next to each of the above "contestants"
6. Corporate sponsorship sign to attach to the back of the US Cowboy

Actors:

Announcer – announces the action using a bullhorn or microphone

US Cowboy – man or woman dressed in cowboy hat, boots, jeans, shirt, tie and suit jacket.

Central American countries – one person to wear each of the country signs who agrees to be chased by the US Cowboy and lassoed. (5 actors needed)

Scoreboard Assistant

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and Gentleman, we are here today to hog-tie Central America – I mean - sign the Central America Free Trade Agreement! (applause) We don't care that the people of the U.S. or of Central American countries have not been consulted! (applause) We don't care that Central American countries are so small and dependent on the U.S. that they don't have any real negotiating power to protect their countries' interests! (applause) In this day and age, might makes right and the U.S. cowboy sure is mighty! (**US Cowboy**)

swaggers to the center of the space, cheering, etc.) So let's get on with the rodeo!

*(Actor wearing **Nicaragua** sign enters the center of the space. As Announcer speaks, **US cowboy** chases "**Nicaragua**" around with the lasso, capturing "**Nicaragua**" as Announcer finishes speaking.)*

ANNOUNCER: Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the hemisphere after Haiti and the country saddled by debt, knows what trade liberalization looks like. Small farmers, without access to technology can't dream of competing with subsidized U.S. agribusiness. Instead of ensuring local food production will be protected, CAFTA intends to include all agricultural products in the agreement.

*(**US Cowboy** takes "**Nicaragua**" to stand by the announcer, removes the lasso rope, and replaces it with the larger rope.)*

*(Repeat above scene with each country, until **all five actors representing countries** are tied up next to the announcer. **US Cowboy** can add in exclamations like "Guatemala looks like a runner!" or "Can't wait to get my hands on Costa Rica!" along with "Yee-haw!", etc.)*

ANNOUNCER: In El Salvador this year, hundreds of thousands marched in the streets to say no to the privatization of their health care system and to reject CAFTA that would threaten their public health care system. A recent report by Human Rights Watch concluded that in El Salvador there is a systematic failure to protect and promote the basic human rights of workers. Instead of improving the plight of the hundreds of thousands of workers in Central America's free trade zones, CAFTA will weaken even the inadequate mechanisms that currently exist to protect workers rights.

ANNOUNCER: In Honduras, the explosion of Free Trade Zones in the eastern part of the country has been paralleled with an explosion of an epidemic of HIV and AIDS. Instead of allowing the poor people of Honduras living with HIV to have access to affordable medicines to save their lives, CAFTA intends to provide stricter "intellectual property" standards that will translate into longer patents for pharmaceutical companies and other provisions that will make these drugs prohibitively expensive. Thousands will die.

ANNOUNCER: Guatemala has the largest indigenous population in Central America. More than 300,000 indigenous people were exterminated during the dirty wars of the 70s and 80s, and they continue to make up a disproportionate number of Guatemalans living in extreme poverty. CAFTA will include intellectual property provisions allowing transnational corporations to make legal claims on and profit from plants, medicines and traditional knowledge that indigenous people of the area have used for centuries. It will also be difficult for poor people to patent their inventions or traditional knowledge.

ANNOUNCER: Costa Rica is the region's most economically developed country and has some of the most efficient and profitable public utilities infrastructure in the region. Transnational corporations such as AT&T are pushing for the privatization of the public telecommunications company, despite the fact that the people of Costa Rica have made loud and clear their intention to keep their telephones public. USTR Zoellick has been playing hard ball with Costa Rica, threatening to leave the country out of CAFTA altogether if they don't agree to privatize.

ANNOUNCER: Now that we've got this agreement "all tied up", let's see who wins and who loses:

(Scoreboard Assistant brings out CAFTA Scoreboard. As Announcer reads each contestant, Scoreboard Assistant places "Loser" sign next to each one.)

ANNOUNCER: Workers: Workers' voices, clamoring for justice in maquilas, will continue to be silenced. *(Group shouts, "LOSER!")*

ANNOUNCER: Small farmers: Small farmers will not be able to compete with cheap imports or with agribusiness and will lose their land. *(Group shouts, "LOSER!")*

ANNOUNCER: Food security: Instead of being able to eat what is produced locally, people will have to buy food. And what if they don't have the cash??? *(Group shouts, "LOSER!")*

ANNOUNCER: Indigenous people: Will export their traditional knowledge for the profit of large corporations and will be forced to migrate to

cities or to the U.S., losing their culture and way of life. (*Group shouts, "LOSER!"*)

ANNOUNCER: Sick people: More people will die from treatable diseases and from HIV and AIDS as medicines become even more prohibitively expensive. (*Group shouts, "LOSER!"*)

ANNOUNCER: Democracy: This agreement is negotiated in secret and will lock into place policies that democratically elected governments will not be able to change. (*Group shouts, "LOSER!"*)

ANNOUNCER: And the winner is: Our fearless cowboy backed by his transnational corporation cronies!!!! (*Group cheers as **US Cowboy** enters center and struts around, showing off the list of corporate sponsors on the back of his/her jacket.*)