



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

May 17, 2004

The Honorable Jim Doyle
Office of the Governor
State Capital, 115 East
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Doyle:

We are writing to express our concern over a recent push by the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to obtain a blanket sign-off agreement from the state of Wisconsin to be bound to the procurement constraints set forth in a long list of international trade agreements now under negotiation. We urge you to write the USTR to inform him that Wisconsin will not be bound to these pre-emptive rules.

At the time of the USTR letter (September 2003), none of the agreements had been completed. Since then, the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), has been completed. Its text was released in early 2004. A number of Wisconsin's procurement policies are inconsistent with CAFTA's procurement rules. If Wisconsin submits to the terms of CAFTA, Wisconsin would have to change some of its existing procurement policies. In addition, we would be severely limited in our ability to enact procurement laws that ensure tax dollars are spent responsibly and in a manner that reflects the values of our citizens.

Due to the complicated nature of the issues surrounding trade agreements generally, as well as the specific problems we see in CAFTA's procurement text, we believe urgent action is needed to prevent Wisconsin from being signed onto any of these agreements.

First, we urge you to write to the Office of the USTR to make clear that Wisconsin is not willing to be bound to CAFTA's procurement rules. It is urgent that Wisconsin not appear on the list of committed states when CAFTA is signed – possibly as early as May 20, 2004 – so that there is no confusion as to our standing.

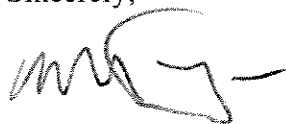
We believe sending such a letter explicitly stating that Wisconsin will not be bound to these agreements is important because the USTR was seeking blanket sign-off privileges to a long list of future agreements not yet completed. We believe it is vital to consider each procurement agreement as it is completed, given that differences in a particular agreement's language or scope could result in Wisconsin assuming an array of different obligations and commitments which may or may not be in our state's interest.

Moreover, we believe that we need a new process for considering such requests because there are many policy issues at play. Procurement laws are an important way in which Wisconsin can use its market power to reflect the values of its citizens. Purchasing preferences help to ensure that tax dollars are used in a responsible way.

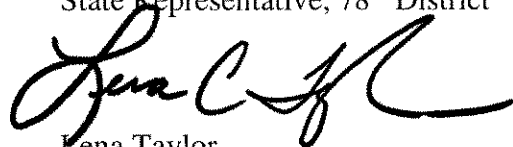
However, the procurement provisions in international trade agreements generally prohibit giving preferences to in-state business. International trade agreements also prohibit procurement rules focused on the way in which a product is manufactured, such as requiring that energy purchases be in part from renewable sources, that goods be made without sweatshop labor, and that goods contain a specified level of recycled content.

We believe it is critical to protect the state's authority to keep its current procurement laws and make future laws that reflect our state's values. Thank you for your consideration of these important concerns. We look forward to working with you to clarify the state's position on both the substance of international trade agreements and the process by which states are consulted.

Sincerely,



Mark Pocan
State Representative, 78th District



Lena Taylor
State Representative, 18th District



Christine Sinicki
State Representative, 20th District



John Lehman
State Representative, 62nd District



Marlin Schneider
State Representative, 72nd District



Terese Berceau
State Representative, 76th District




Spencer Black
State Representative, 77th District



Judy Robson
State Senator, 15th District



Tim Carpenter
State Senator, 3rd District



Chuck Chvala
State Senator, 16th District



Robert Wirth
State Senator, 22nd District



Russell Decker
State Senator, 29th District



Dave Hansen
State Senator, 30th District