



215 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE • Washington, D.C. 20003 • 202/546-4996 • [www.citizen.org](http://www.citizen.org)

For Immediate Release:  
Nov. 7, 2012

Contact: Steve Knievel (202) 454-5122

## **Obama, Romney and Congressional Candidates Nationwide Used Trade-Themed Ads to Appeal to U.S. Majority Opposing Trade Status Quo, Reinforcing Public Anger and Building Expectations for Reform**

***Presidential Candidates Ran Three Times as Many Trade-Related Ads as in 2008; 30 States' Congressional Race Ads Featured Criticism of Trade Status Quo; Composition of the Senate Shifts in Favor of Fair Trade***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – An analysis of the 2012 election reveals a bipartisan race to align campaign positions with the American public's [opposition](#) to current U.S. trade policies and the job offshoring they cause. Over the course of the past three months, a wave of ads focused mainly on job offshoring and secondarily on trade with China, has spotlighted the damage caused by current U.S. trade policies, fueling transpartisan expectations for reform and further complicating the path for the massive Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) “free trade” pact that is slated for completion in 2013, Public Citizen said today.

The presidential race featured more than three times as many trade-themed ads as in 2008, creating a trade-reform-is-urgently-needed narrative that reinforces the majority position of the U.S. public. Following this trend, congressional candidates across 30 states deployed more than 125 ads criticizing the economic fallout of status quo trade policy.

Candidates who voted against Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) touted their fair-trade record. Many candidates, including incumbents who could not claim such a record, touted votes in favor of closing tax loopholes that incentivize offshoring, attacked their opponent on offshoring, or pledged to be “tough on China.” The magnitude of trade-themed ads to which the American public was exposed in this election cycle was reinforced by an unprecedented prominence of trade themes in the presidential debates and stump speeches.

“Given Americans’ unhappiness with our trade status quo, the reason candidates nationwide continually spotlighted job offshoring and other damage caused by unfair trade was to win. But the result is that Americans have been saturated with trade-related messaging that reinforces their anger about getting screwed by unfair trade, which creates heightened expectations that the people they just elected will do something to fix these problems and certainly not support more of the same,” said Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch.

Public Citizen analyzed the voting record of incumbents and the detailed public positions of new candidates and found that the election increased the net number of fair-trade members of the Senate by at least six, including with the addition of some long-time fair-trade champions. In the House of Representatives, too many candidates' positions remain unknown to assess the overall fair trade balance.

“As we head into 2013, when the biggest trade fights since NAFTA are expected, we will make sure voters know whether their newly elected representatives act to redress the trade-related problems against which they campaigned,” said Ben Beachy, research director at Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch. “Given that this election cycle’s trade spotlight only reinforced public rejection of broken trade policies, woe be to those who ran for change and then go on to support trade-as-usual.”

In focusing on the damaging outcomes of our current trade policy, both presidential candidates and numerous congressional incumbents in tight races campaigned against their own records and positions of support for FTAs based on the model of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which includes investment provisions that incentivize American job offshoring and procurement rules that ban Buy American preferences and thus send U.S. tax dollars offshore.

“Underlying the cynicism of those who campaigned against offshoring while supporting trade pacts that caused it is the reality that supporting more-of-the-same on trade is not a defensible position with the American public,” said Wallach. “Scant press coverage for recent trade pact votes allowed some candidates to attempt a bait-and-switch in 2012. But now they face 2013’s high-profile trade battles royale over an 11-country NAFTA expansion to Asia and Latin America and yet another grant of presidential trade authority with their constituents expecting them to vote against more of the same.”

Public Citizen’s detailed analysis of candidate ads and website trade content is below:

- **President Barack Obama and former Gov. Mitt Romney deployed an unprecedented 33 trade-related ads this election cycle.** In 2008, Obama used nine trade-themed ads, while GOP challenger John McCain ran just one such ad. This time, Obama’s trade ads more than doubled to 21, while Romney’s 12 trade-themed ads surpassed the number Obama ran in 2008.
- **Fifty-seven percent of candidates in competitive or open House or Senate races also addressed trade policy through paid general election ads or positions taken on campaign websites, including 72 percent of Democratic candidates and 41 percent of GOP candidates.**
- **Among all paid ads used by the 294 campaigns, support for trade deals was limited to one ad in which the GOP candidate for Hawaii’s open Senate seat, former Gov. Linda Lingle, attacked Senator-elect Maize Hirono for opposing all three FTAs in 2011 when she was a House member.** Despite expectations for a close race, Hirono beat Lingle by 26 percentage points.
- **As further evidence of how politically untenable support for the trade status quo has become, very few congressional candidates included content on their websites supportive of any**

**NAFTA-style pact, regardless of their voting record for such deals.** Only 22 of 294 candidates in competitive or open seat races made favorable mention of trade pacts on their websites.

- **Campaigning against status quo trade policy even penetrated traditionally “free trade” states such as Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota Texas, and Utah,** Trade-focused campaigns have long been a fixture of congressional races in the Rust Belt, Southeast and other areas hit with particularly heavy job losses from NAFTA-style deals. But the 2012 campaign featured trade-related ads across 30 states, spanning the country from Maine to Hawaii. In Colorado, candidates such as Ed Perlmutter (D), Joe Miklosi (D) and Sal Pace (D) blanketed TV channels with criticism of opponents’ offshoring records while backing job-creating Buy America provisions, which would be barred under the TPP deal being negotiated.
- **In the Connecticut, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Wisconsin Senate races, winning candidates employed trade ads.** Re-elected **Sen. Sherrod Brown** (D-Ohio), the Senate’s leading advocate for fair trade and corporate America’s No. 1 Senate target for defeat, used two trade-themed ads in a campaign that overcame \$20.7 million in independent expenditures against him. In North Dakota, **Senator-elect Heidi Heitkamp** (D) also ran two trade-themed ads in her successful campaign against Rep. Rick Berg (R), who had voted for the Korea, Colombia and Panama FTAs in 2011. As North Dakota’s attorney general, Heitkamp was a leading fair-trade advocate, noting to the *Los Angeles Times* in 1999: “From my perspective, NAFTA and other trade agreements present the greatest challenge to state sovereignty that we have.” **Sen. John Tester** (D-Mont.), who was elected in 2006 on a campaign featuring his stance against harmful trade agreements and who consistently voted as he had campaigned, again used advertising on the theme. In a still-not-called race, Tester has a sizeable lead over GOP candidate Dennis Rehberg, who voted for nearly every NAFTA-style trade deal during the decade-plus he served as Montana’s U.S. House representative. **Sen. Claire McCaskill** (D-Mo.) used the theme to win re-election despite her support for the NAFTA-style deals with Korea and Panama passed by Congress last year. In battleground state Pennsylvania, **Sen. Bob Casey** (D) launched five distinct ads touting his record as a fair-trader, including his consistent opposition to NAFTA-style deals: “I’m Bob Casey. My opponent and I just disagree. The one-sided trade deals he supports aren’t competition. Tom Smith backs laws that send our jobs to Asia, Central America, South America ... everywhere but here. I’ll always fight against unfair trade laws and I helped pass legislation to put tariffs on China now. I approve this message because I’m proud to stand up for Pennsylvania.”
- **For House members in competitive races, their fair-trade voting records and focus on opponents’ support for damaging trade pacts was often critical to winning.**
  - **Rep. Brad Sherman** (D-Calif.), who has a 100 percent fair-trade voting record and is a fair-trade leader in the House, won an intense battle between two senior incumbents, beating House Foreign Relations Committee ranking member **Howard Berman** (D-Calif.), who had supported most trade pacts from NAFTA on. Sherman’s fair-trade record was one of the only differences between the candidates’ voting records, giving Sherman the labor and

grassroots support to overcome a withering array of Berman endorsements, from the *Los Angeles Times* to scores of Democratic and GOP policymakers.

- **In the closely fought race for Iowa’s second district seat, trade played a large role. Both Rep. Dave Loebsack (D) and John Archer (R) employed the trade theme in paid ads.** Archer, a John Deere executive, attacked Loebsack’s votes against the three FTAs in 2011 in a news release while at the same time running an ad generally criticizing the offshoring trend. Loebsack directly criticized his challenger for supporting the NAFTA-style trade deals: “He’s a corporate executive who supports more unfair trade with Korea, Panama and Columbia.” Trade issues also took center stage in the debates in this race, with Loebsack using the issue to distinguish himself from his opponent: “It’s about the NAFTA-style free trade agreements that John supports that I don’t support.” Loebsack, who has a 100 percent pro-fair-trade record, beat Archer handily.
- **In a neck-and-neck rematch of a 2010 race in upstate New York, fair-trader Dan Maffei (D) targeted Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle (R) for her votes last year for the NAFTA-style deals with Korea, Colombia and Panama to successfully reverse her upset of his incumbency in 2010.** In one of Maffei’s paid ads, the flags of the three FTA countries surround the text “Congresswoman Buerkle: Unfair Trade,” as an announcer states, “Congresswoman Ann Marie Buerkle voted for tax breaks for outsourcing American jobs [and for] unfair trade agreements.” When previously in Congress, Maffei was a co-sponsor of major trade reform legislation called the TRADE Act of 2009.
- **In several races, both the Republican and Democratic candidates used the trade theme, competing to portray their opponents as more to blame for offshoring.** Cheri Bustos (D) took Illinois’ 17<sup>th</sup>-district seat from incumbent Rep. Bobby Schilling (R) after a campaign that included multiple ads to paint Schilling, who voted for the three FTAs last year, as responsible for the offshoring of U.S. jobs. In one ad, Bustos says: “On trade, Washington has rigged the game and sent our jobs overseas,” after which she blames Schilling for being part of the problem. Schilling responded with an ad that sought to portray Bustos as the one responsible for offshoring, despite her publicly stated opposition to various trade pacts. Bustos ended up toppling Schilling by a healthy six point margin. In North Carolina’s seventh district, one of the three trade-focused ads by Democratic incumbent Mark McIntyre, who will become the only white Democrat remaining in North Carolina’s congressional delegation after redistricting if he maintains his narrow lead, featured the congressman outside a closed Converse shoe factory saying: “Now this plant’s closed, and these shoes are made in Asia. The fact is our state has already lost 110,000 jobs just to China, and America’s trade policy is making it even worse. David Rouzer supports tax breaks for companies that send jobs like these to Asia ... I’m Mike McIntyre and this [*pointing to the closed Converse factory*] is why I opposed NAFTA and all the other bad trade deals that have sent our jobs abroad.” Republican challenger David Rouzer retorted with an ad that faulted McIntyre for authoring “no bills to stop Converse from shipping jobs overseas.”

- **Throughout the campaign, both Obama and Romney largely omitted references to unpopular trade agreements that they both support, instead harnessing public ire about the damage caused by such pacts and then pivoting to attack the other as being soft on China or responsible for job offshoring.** Despite the unprecedented number of trade-themed ads, neither candidate’s ads even mentioned the FTAs approved last year with Korea, Colombia and Panama, nor the sweeping TPP deal, despite both candidates’ stated support of the pacts. Obama’s silence regarding the FTAs in paid ads is particularly notable given that their passage was perhaps Obama’s most significant legislative achievement in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress and occurred with mainly GOP support and thus could have been used to counter Romney’s core argument that Obama could not work with Congress to make progress. Ninety percent of Obama’s trade-related ads painted Romney as friendly to offshoring and Obama as tough on offshoring. Romney, meanwhile, used 75 percent of his trade-related ads to attack Obama for his China trade policy, while committing Romney to “crack down” on China.
- **Offshoring was by far the most prominent trade-related theme in the 2012 election for both GOP and Democratic candidates.** Paid ads condemning offshoring constituted 72 percent of trade-related ads in open and competitive congressional races and 64 percent in the presidential race. Offshoring criticism also dominated campaign websites, including 48 percent of the trade mentions on congressional websites in open and competitive races, and 54 percent on the presidential campaign sites. However, for the incumbents whose trade messaging defied their own voting records, trade agreements were conveniently omitted as a cause of offshoring. Democrats in this category tended to blame offshoring on tax loopholes that incentivize companies to send jobs abroad, while Republicans tended to blame misdirected stimulus spending, excessive regulation or onerous taxation. Eighteen Democrats and Republicans used these pivot claims to campaign against the offshoring of jobs in 2012 despite voting just last year in favor of the Korea FTA, under which thousands of U.S. jobs have already disappeared. Since the FTA went into effect this year, U.S. exports to Korea have fallen by \$1.2 billion while imports from Korea have risen, yielding a 34 percent increase in the job-killing U.S.-Korea trade deficit.
- **A secondary theme that emerged was a commitment to “get tough on China” with subthemes of currency manipulation or non-compliance with patent protections.** While numerous Republicans and Democrats sought to paint their opponents as soft on China, there was little mention of the TPP, which is envisioned as a docking agreement that China could eventually join. Indeed, U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk has stated that he “would love nothing more” than to see China join this NAFTA-style deal with the United States, which would likely intensify the trend of jobs lost to China. The exception to the quietude on TPP was newly elected U.S. senator from Maine, Angus King (I), who repeatedly criticized the deal at campaign events.
- **More than 40 percent of House and Senate incumbents in tight races who indicted the trade status quo in paid ads or campaign websites have voted for the current trade model more often than they voted against it.** A half dozen Republican incumbents ran ads attacking current trade policy despite a 100 percent track record of support for every single NAFTA-style trade deal arising under their tenure. These include Allen West (R-Fla.), David Rivera (R-Fla.), Bobby

Schilling (R-Ill.), Dan Benishek (R-Mich.), Reid Ribble (R-Wis.) and Scott Brown (R-Mass.), the incumbent who lost the headline-grabbing battle for Massachusetts' Senate seat. Rep. Cedric Richmond (D-La.) stands out among Democratic candidates who used the trade theme despite a voting record for unfair trade. Last year, Richmond voted for the NAFTA-style deals with Korea and Panama that both include special protection to facilitate U.S. corporations' job offshoring. As well, an increase in the U.S. trade deficit with Korea since that pact went into effect already had cost U.S. jobs. Incredibly, Richmond chose to attack his challenger in a paid ad for supporting offshoring-prone trade deals. Even more ironically, Richmond cited his own accountability: "I've taken responsibility for my actions because public officials must be accountable. And we should hold Congressman Cao accountable for his record: supporting trade deals with China that send our jobs overseas." While the United States actually has no trade deal with China, it does now have job-eroding deals with Korea and Panama, thanks to Richmond's support.

To obtain these findings, Public Citizen monitored campaign ads and websites in the presidential race and in all congressional races with open seats, new seats or seats designated as competitive by the Cook Political Report. The 144 tracked congressional races include 249 campaigns for the House of Representatives and 45 campaigns for the Senate. For each race, Public Citizen researchers scanned general election paid ads posted through Nov. 5 on the campaigns' websites or official YouTube channels. In addition, researchers used software designed to scrape official campaign websites for references to a list of trade-related terms. Researchers then manually studied the results of the software scan to verify relevance before tabulating trade-related statements.

The full array of trade-themed 2012 general election campaign ads may be viewed online at <http://www.citizen.org/2012-election-ad-index>.

###