

For Immediate Release
Wednesday, June 24, 2009
Contact: Adriana Surfas
202-225-3661

DeLauro Joins Colleagues to Forge New Path on Trade Agreements

Washington, D.C. – Congresswoman Rosa L. DeLauro (Conn. – 3), chairwoman of the Agriculture, Rural Development, and Food and Drug Administration Appropriations Subcommittee, pressed for a shift in the debate on trade pacts as to what we are for with respect to a new model for trade and globalization rules, and joined with colleagues at a press conference to introduce the Trade Reform, Accountability, Development and Employment (TRADE) Act. The legislation, sponsored by Congressman Michael Michaud (ME-2), requires a review of key existing trade pacts, including NAFTA, the WTO and CAFTA, and sets forth what must and must not be included in future trade pacts. It enjoys the support of more than 100 bipartisan cosponsors.

“For many years we have fought against inadequate agreements that have left consumers, workers, the environment, and local economies at risk. This bill gives us a chance to start fresh and do it right, mapping out a fair way forward on trade,” said DeLauro. **“I serve as chair of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee and have worked in recent years to give regulatory agencies like the FDA the tools they need to deal with the quickly rising flood of imported food products. But to truly address serious food safety threats, we must also reform the way we negotiate trade agreements.”**

Today, the United States imports over 80% of our seafood and 33 billion pounds of fresh produce annually. FDA officials have stated that half of all food borne illness outbreaks in U.S. of FDA regulated products have come from imports.

“It is clear,” DeLauro added, **“decisions about the importation of food products are a public health issue that must be taken into account in any trade discussion. We must embrace a thorough assessment of an exporting country's food safety system before its food products can be imported into the U.S. That means evaluating its food safety laws and regulations; the enforcement of those laws; and its laboratory and inspection programs.”**

Currently, the U.S. allows sales of imported meat that does not satisfy our safety laws, but rather is “equivalent” – a phrase not defined in the trade pacts. Under Section 4 of the legislation, if an agreement contains health and safety standards for food and other products, then it must meet or exceed United States standards with respect to food safety. The TRADE Act calls for the Commissioner of the FDA and the Consumer Product Safety Commission to assess the regulatory system of a country with which we negotiate to determine whether it provides the same or better protection of health and safety for food and other products. And if it does not then we can prohibit the importation of food and other products from that country into ours.

“This is the opportunity to build a new model for trade in an increasingly global world economy and at the same time protect public health,” continued DeLauro. **“By requiring a review of existing trade pacts and submission of a plan by the president to fix these agreements - before new trade negotiations or congressional consideration of pending pacts, we can ensure more people reap trade's benefits while protecting others from ever growing risk and insecurity.”**

In addition to reviewing existing trade pacts and laying out what must and must not be included in future trade pacts, the TRADE Act provides for the renegotiation of existing trade agreements. It describes the key elements of a new trade negotiating and approval mechanism to replace Fast Track that would enhance Congress' role in the formative aspects of agreements and promote future deals that could enjoy broad support among the American public

The TRADE ACT includes:

- **Review:** The bill requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a comprehensive review of the major trade pacts that comprise the model on which U.S. trade agreement have been based, such as NAFTA, WTO, and CAFTA. The review, which must be completed before new trade negotiations or congressional consideration of pending pacts, includes an assessment of economic outcomes in the United States and abroad and various security, human rights, social and environmental indicators. The GAO must also report on how the current pacts measure up to the bill's criteria with respect to what must and must not be included in trade pacts.
- **What Must and Must Not Be in All Agreements:** The bill contains a detailed description of the key provisions that must be included in all future U.S. trade agreements and what aspects of the current model must never again be replicated to ensure that trade pacts provide broader benefits. It sets forth the environmental and labor, food and product safety, agriculture, trade remedy, human rights, federalism safeguard and currency anti-manipulation rules and national security exceptions that must be included in all U.S. trade pacts. This section also lists what aspects of the NAFTA-WTO model cannot be included in future deals, including bans on Buy American and anti-sweat shop or environmental procurement policies; new rights and privileges for foreign investors to promote offshoring and expose domestic health and environmental laws to attacks in foreign tribunals; service sector privatization and deregulation requirements; and special protections for Big Pharma to limit affordable access to drugs. This section comprises over half of the bill, given that today 'trade' pacts extend far beyond traditional trade matters to cover so many different essential policy topics that are the crux of Congress' domestic agenda - from access to essential services such as health care and education to regulation of financial services to medicine patents to investment, procurement and local development policy to procurement and food and product safety policy.
- **Renegotiation:** The bill requires the President to submit a plan to address through renegotiation the gaps identified between our current major pacts and the criteria for what must and must not be included in U.S. trade agreements. The bill establishes a special congressional super committee chaired by the Ways and Means and Finance Committee chairs to work with the President on formulating this plan. The super committee also includes a role for the chairs and ranking members of other committees whose core jurisdiction is directly affected by today's expansive trade pacts.
- **Replacing Fast Track:** The bill lays out criteria for a new mechanism to replace the anti-democratic Fast Track negotiating process. To obtain agreements that benefit a wider array of interests, this new process includes Congress setting readiness criteria to select future negotiating partners; mandatory negotiating objectives based on the bill's criteria of what must be and must not be in future trade pacts; and the requirements that Congress must certify that the objectives were met, and then vote on an agreement before it can be signed. These criteria have been supported in AFL-CIO, Change to Win and National Farmers Union resolutions.