

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 5, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
Washington, DC

Dear President Bush:

We are writing to express our serious concerns with statements attributed to U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab in recent news articles discussing Costa Rica's referendum on approval of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). We are particularly disturbed by her comment that "Costa Rica could lose valuable access to the U.S. market if the country rejects a free trade agreement with the United States when voters go to the polls on Sunday."

As you know, this is nonsense. Barriers to access of Costa Rican goods will not change if Costa Rican voters reject CAFTA. Costa Rica is the oldest democracy in Latin America and the United States has had a very strong and friendly relationship with this country throughout history. That relationship will continue regardless of the outcome of Sunday's vote, and despite the unfortunate words of Ambassador Schwab.

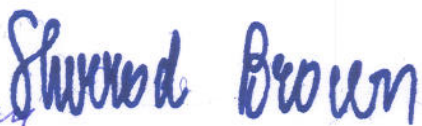
For an official of the United States to warn the people of Costa Rica of possible retaliation of any kind for exercising their rights in an election is unworthy of the democratic traditions our countries share. This is particularly disheartening since CAFTA is just as controversial in the United States as it is in Costa Rica. It was only approved by one vote at midnight in the House of Representatives, and it would likely be rejected if it were put to a vote in Congress today. If the people of the United States had a chance to vote on this agreement, it would likely fail by a significant margin.

The executive branch of the United States does not have the authority to eliminate Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) benefits if a country rejects a free trade agreement in a democratically held election. Cancelling basic CBI benefits with Costa Rica would require an act of Congress. Both Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi made it clear to the Costa Rican Ambassador that they would not support such a move, and that they oppose any linkage between CBI benefits and approval or disapproval of CAFTA.

We urge you to make it clear that the United States is not threatening retaliation against the people of Costa Rica for exercising their right to vote on October 7<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Byron L. Dorgan  
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

Bernie Sanders  
United States Senator