

NAFTA EXPANSION ALERT

What You
Need to Know

OFTA :

The U.S. - Oman
Free Trade Agreement

Background

The 1994 **North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)** empowered multinational corporations to export good U.S. jobs, while limiting basic worker's rights and environmental safeguards in the U.S., Mexico and Canada. The results: wage levels stagnate in all three nations, three million U.S. manufacturing jobs were lost, and now even Mexico has fewer factory jobs after corporations eventually traded down Mexico's \$5/day wages for China's \$1/day. Some 1.3 million Mexican *campesino* (peasant) farmers lost their livelihoods, hunger rates jumped in Mexico, and desperate migration increased.

Because of the devastating fallout from NAFTA, it took two years and billions in pork barrel projects and corporate campaign cash to pass the NAFTA expansion to Central America (**CAFTA**) by just one vote in July 2005. Recklessly, the Bush administration is now looking to expand NAFTA to the Middle East and the next country on their list is the Sultanate of Oman. Bush signed a trade agreement on January 19, 2006 with Oman, and wants Congress to approve it now!



The proposed U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement (OFTA) is word-for-word CAFTA, except where it's worse.

Plus, consider some special problems with Oman. Oman is listed by the U.S. State Department for human trafficking. The OFTA would provide special access to U.S. markets for clothes made in sweatshops located in Oman - meaning more indentured workers will be trafficked from Bangladesh, China, and other countries to slave away in Omani sweatshops, and more jobs will be lost here at home. Plus, OFTA provides even more power than NAFTA or CAFTA for multinationals to attack our health and environmental laws.

The Oman FTA could be introduced for a vote at any time, but Congress, with elections just around the corner, does not want to have to vote on more bad trade deals, so we can stop Bush in his tracks if we flood Congress with calls right now!

Tell Congress that expanding NAFTA to the Middle East is a bad idea

Call the U.S. Capitol Today (202) 224-3121. Ask to be connected to your House member (Give your zip code if you're not sure of your Rep's name)

- ❖ When you are connected to your Representative's office, ask for the staffer handling trade issues. Tell him or her that you oppose expanding NAFTA to Oman.
- ❖ Ask for your Representative's position on OFTA in writing to be sent by e-mail or regular mail.
- ❖ Use a local or personal story of damage from bad trade deals to illustrate your case or use the talking points on the back of the flyer.
- ❖ After you've called, share with us what you were told. This is key to our holding Congress accountable. Contact David Edeli at Public Citizen at dedeli@citizen.org or (202)-454-5111.

Oman-NAFTA Expansion (OFTA) Talking Points:

* **More NAFTAs mean more lost U.S. jobs:** A decade of NAFTA has resulted in the largest U.S. trade deficit ever - a deficit caused by a flood of job-killing imported goods and the export of 3 million U.S. manufacturing jobs. Our wages are flat even as prices rise. We can't afford any more NAFTA-like trade deals. We need to change this broken trade model!

* **Oman bans independent labor unions:** Currently in Oman it is illegal to form independent trade unions. Workers can only join "representative committees" that include management representatives. The OFTA, like CAFTA and NAFTA, has strict intellectual property rights protections with tough enforcement - but no enforceable labor rights. OFTA merely requires Oman to enforce its own labor laws, and while the Sultan has promised "reform," OFTA would provide no recourse if he (or his successor) changes his mind. Under OFTA, there's not even any penalty for weakening this existing bad law further.

* **This Oman FTA will lead to serious human rights abuses:** The majority of the private sector workforce in Oman are foreign-born "guest workers" from China, Bangladesh and other poor countries. Recent horrific reports about the results of the U.S. Free Trade Agreement with nearby Jordan show how labor rights abuses and human trafficking can greatly increase with the introduction of a free trade agreement. The State Department has noted that Oman "does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking."

* **The Oman FTA gives foreign corporations more rights than U.S. citizens:** OFTA contains the same type of "investor-state" provisions as NAFTA and CAFTA, which would allow an Omani company (or a company from any other country incorporated in Oman) to sue the United States government in a secret tribunal, demanding payment from our tax dollars, if the company feels that any U.S. government policy is restricting their ability to make profit.

* **OFTA could undermine U.S. national security:** The OFTA goes beyond even CAFTA and NAFTA in explicitly promoting rights for foreign companies - including government-owned companies - to operate our sensitive infrastructure: electricity grids, port operations and more. OFTA allows foreign investors to take the U.S. government to secret tribunals if the profitability of any foreign investment in these sensitive sectors is threatened by an act of the U.S. Congress!

For more info about U.S.-Oman FTA, go here: <http://www.citizenstrade.org/oman.php>

Have you sent a letter to Congress about the Oman agreement yet? If not, do so here: http://action.citizen.org/campaign.jsp?campaign_KEY=3664

