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Inside-the-Beltway Mock-Up Maneuvering on Three Bush-Era, NAFTA-Style Trade Pacts Distracts from Real Issue: Pacts Will Cause More U.S. Job Loss

Statement of Lori Wallach, Director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch

Today's spectacle really highlighted the divide between the public – which polling shows opposes more NAFTA-style trade pacts because they kill jobs – and Washington, where Congress has engaged in weeks of inside-the-beltway political posturing over whether to kill off a program to aid workers who lose jobs to bad trade policy when passing more of these pacts.

Outside the beltway, one can only imagine what Americans are thinking as they watch this congressional kabuki dance over the fate of aid to workers who lose jobs to bad trade pacts, when their real concern is why Congress would consider passing more trade deals that will cause more American job loss.

Poll after poll shows that the vast majority of the American public – across stunningly diverse demographics – is opposed to NAFTA-style trade deals.

What's really gotten lost in all this wrangling over Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), which effectively is a job burial insurance program for bad trade policies, is that the three leftover trade deals from former President George W. Bush are bad in and of themselves and will cost more American jobs.

Even an official government study finds that the Korea deal will increase our trade deficit, and we know up front that it will kill jobs and undermine our national security. The Colombia deal will eliminate any leverage the U.S. has to combat the forced displacements and murders of unionists, Afro-Colombians, human rights defenders and others – problems that have gotten worse since this deal was signed in 2007. The Panama deal will make it harder for the U.S. government to penalize tax-dodging multinational corporations. The supplemental deal on autos for Korea, the labor “Action Plan” for Colombia and the limited tax information exchange agreement for Panama do not alleviate the aforementioned problems, as Public Citizen has extensively documented. And, given extensive Democratic congressional and base group opposition to all three pacts, they have not even operated as intended to create political cover for these damaging pacts.

Moreover, the fact remains that all three deals have the same damaging provisions we all remember from NAFTA: limits on financial services regulation, foreign investor privileges that

promote offshoring, weak labor standards, limits on imported food safety and inspection, and the ridiculous private investor-state enforcement system that empowers multinational corporations to go around our domestic courts and directly challenge our state and federal laws before foreign tribunals and demand compensation from our tax dollars for claimed violations of the trade deal.

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