

Organization for Competitive Markets

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OCM Urges U.S. House to Defeat CAFTA

Lincoln, NE ~ The Organization for Competitive Markets (OCM) is urging defeat of the Central American - Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) by the U.S. House of Representatives. A House vote on the trade treaty may be scheduled as early as next week (July 18 - 22).

Two weeks ago, the U.S. Senate approved CAFTA-DR 54-45, disappointing the free trade cult which expected at least 60 votes. This compares with 83-15 margins favoring trade agreements in the past. The measure needs 218 House votes to succeed, and some claim 225 House members have committed to vote against it.

"Past trade agreements have caused America to become a net food importer. People making \$2 per day are not going to buy our pork chops and tenderloins," said OCM President, Keith Mudd, Missouri. "CAFTA-DR is an irresponsible, destructive trade agreement that's being sold to the American people as 'good for business'. The treaty transfers our sovereignty to unelected, foreign tribunals. It promotes development of vertically integrated commodity production in these countries to access cheap labor, and sell back to the U.S."

Data shows that average wages in Central America range from \$2 per day in Honduras to \$8 per day in Costa Rica. Labor laws protecting workers and providing benefits are non-existent, while environmental standards are some of the lowest in the world. Central American farmers are against the pact because multinational food corporations displace them, and harm their food sovereignty.

"These circumstances set the stage for a resurrection of plantation agriculture that will accelerate the loss of America's independent food producers while making serfs out of the Latin American population," said Mudd. "We know that American interests have already moved certain textile factories into Honduras where the cheap labor force there is displacing American workers. We also know that American companies interested in building vertically integrated cattle feeding and processing operations are actively engaged in negotiations to move their businesses into Central America. Virtually every sector of American agriculture will be significantly challenged by CAFTA-DR while the culture and economic health of the Central American people will be compromised."

Recent findings show that animal health products are one-third the cost in Central America, often for the same products manufactured by the same pharmaceutical companies used by U.S. producers. In addition, certain antibiotics banned for use in food animals in the U.S. are routinely used by Central American cattle producers.

"CAFTA-DR is bad deal for Americans and it is a bad deal for Central Americans. Only a few will benefit while many will suffer. We must urge the House of Representatives to defeat CAFTA-DR."

The Organization for Competitive Markets (OCM) is an agricultural free market and competition organization working for honesty, prosperity and economic liberty for farmers, ranchers and rural communities.