

WORKING PEOPLE NEED REAL TRADE REFORM, NOT JUST RHETORIC

For decades, America's trade agenda has failed working people. Last year, voters in both parties called for change. In the early days of the Trump administration, actions have been initiated on existing trade policies, from assessing the national security impact of steel and aluminum imports to considering reform of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement. Updating our nation's trade deals is vital, but only if the focus is on how to increase and improve the quality of jobs. Much work lies ahead, and the direction and effectiveness of President Trump's efforts still is unknown.

No task is more pressing than ensuring the administration's renegotiation of NAFTA results in new rules that reflect the needs and interests of working families, not global corporations. NAFTA has failed working people in Canada, Mexico and the United States. Since NAFTA's inception in 1994, corporate profits are up, but wages in all three countries are stagnant. Despite increased productivity, workers are not receiving a fair return on their work. There is more trade between the three NAFTA countries, but that trade is unbalanced, with the United States running consistent deficits with Mexico and Canada. The freedom to negotiate together is under attack in all three countries, diminishing the voices of working people and increasing inequality. As with other policy failures, broken trade deals disproportionately have harmed communities of color.

We can do better. NAFTA is not a failure of trade itself, but the result of trade rules rigged to favor global corporations and the wealthy elites in all three countries. Trade should be a cooperative endeavor that benefits us all. For that to happen, NAFTA must change dramatically.

NAFTA and its inequities can't be fixed with mere tweaks or by substituting language from the failed Trans-Pacific Partnership. Nor should the United States adopt a strategy that pits the working people of North America against each other. We must end the race to the bottom that hurts working families, as it impoverishes our democracy and starves investment in our public infrastructure. We must replace NAFTA's vicious cycle with a virtuous one—with a set of rules that promote shared prosperity for workers in all three nations.

We must incorporate the lessons learned from NAFTA's failures into its new rules. This means NAFTA's labor provisions must be substantially strengthened to improve protections for all working people, regardless of immigration status. NAFTA's labor rules must meet international standards. Swift and certain monitoring and enforcement tools must replace the current convoluted, ineffective process. This will require effective labor inspections and explicit protections for workers who migrate, including a ban on recruitment fees, accountability for abusive practices by employers and labor recruiters, transparency regarding wages and terms of employment, and real access to justice and legal assistance. Only when all workers share these protections will we be able to effectively join together to negotiate for a better life.

A new NAFTA, with rules that working people help write, is an opportunity to begin constructing a Global New Deal for working families. The critical elements of a new NAFTA are:

- A democratized renegotiation process
- Strong labor rules with swift and certain enforcement that prevent the commodification of workers
- Elimination of corporate courts

- Enforceable currency rules
- Stronger rules of origin
- Protection for responsible government purchasing and Buy American policies
- Improved screening for foreign domestic investment
- Improved trade enforcement as part of a robust manufacturing policy
- Elimination of obstacles to effective trade enforcement
- New rules to prevent tax dodging
- Removal of rules that undermine protections for workers, consumers and the environment
- Commitments to invest in infrastructure
- Consumer protections that ensure financial stability
- Prohibition of unsafe and unfair cross-border transportation services
- Protection for intellectual property while ensuring the right to affordable medicines
- Prohibition on global corporations from using NAFTA to capture public services for profit
- Strong environmental rules with swift and certain enforcement

Working people and our unions are united and will mobilize with the same level of intensity as our campaign to defeat the TPP. We will work to advance a set of positive and forward-looking trade rules through a comprehensive public campaign on the ground, online and over the air. The elements of the campaign will include the follow action points:

- Educate elected officials, policy makers, opinion leaders and all workers about the causes and effects of NAFTA and other U.S. trade policies, showing there is another way, and that we need to act collectively to achieve a higher standard of living;
- Report and publicize the impact of NAFTA on the quality of life for North America's working people, including the effect on jobs, wages and negotiating power;
- Demand greater democracy, transparency and participation in the NAFTA renegotiation process—and publicize any failure to open up the process;
- Mobilize our members, community allies and all workers to demand a better NAFTA, with rules centered on working people's policy choices—not those of the corporate class;
- Develop and execute joint strategies with labor movements and allies in Mexico and Canada to ensure that meaningful and effective protections for working people and higher standards are at the core of any changes to NAFTA; and
- Utilize all available strategies, including public and social media, to broaden the base of popular engagement and advance our vision of a worker-centered NAFTA.

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