

The gun industry must be subjected to the same laws that govern every other American business, and courthouse doors must remain open to those injured or who have lost loved ones because of the gun industry's negligence. This bill would allow gun dealers to knowingly sell large quantities of guns to a single customer intending to traffic the guns to criminals without any legal repercussions.

Stripping away the threat of legal action would seriously jeopardize any opportunity to make guns safer. Without the threat of lawsuits, the gun industry would have no incentive to incorporate gun locks, safety triggers, and smart gun technology into their products. Imagine if this bill had been passed 40 years ago to cover the auto industry. Today cars would not have seatbelts, airbags, or antilock brakes.

Instead of giving the gun industry never-before-seen levels of protection, I support giving the industry Federal research and development money. This money will be used to develop reasonable safety measures for their products.

Congress has not been responding to the threat that gun violence poses on our safety and homeland security. So I will speak in a language the congressional leadership understands: dollars and cents.

It is unfortunate Congress will not allow the Centers for Disease Control to study the economic impact of gun violence, so we have to use data from independent sources.

□ 1945

Independent studies have shown gun violence costs our health care system over \$100 billion a year, \$100 billion a year. The \$100 billion-a-year cost includes premiums paid for private health insurance and tax dollars used to pay for Medicaid.

These costs often are not reimbursed and cost the States vital health care money. Victims who survive and suffer years of rehabilitation costs run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. The average cost of each firearm fatality, including medical care, police services, and lost productivity is almost \$1 million per person.

Researchers found taxpayers finance 48 percent of health care costs resulting from gun violence through Medicaid and other government programs, which means the American taxpayers are footing the bill for the destruction gun violence causes.

Mr. Speaker, why are we spending time helping the gun dealers and manufacturers? We should be investigating technology that will make guns safer. Safer, smarter guns prevent lawsuits against the gun industry, but more importantly prevent the tragic, unnecessary loss of life that the gun industry's negligence provokes.

We should be giving them research and development money. We should be doing everything we can to prevent the injuries. People do not understand

when gun violence hits home, it is a whole disaster to the family and to the community. We can do a better job. We should be doing a better job.

But protecting the gun industry, or certainly the gun dealers from not being able to be sued, is wrong. We should not be closing the courts for anyone.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. FOXX addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order for 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

LACK OF SUPPORT FOR CAFTA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am on the floor again tonight. I have been speaking against CAFTA. I have joined my friends on both the Republican side and the Democratic side who feel that CAFTA is not good for the American workers and not good for the American people and certainly does not help those in Central America.

And tonight I want to take just a few minutes and insert for the RECORD the entirety of a letter from seven members of the general assemblies down in five of the countries that are opposed to CAFTA.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman that I met recently is from El Salvador, and this was at a conference last week that the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and I attended, Interfaith Council of Protestants, Catholics, and also one rabbi to speak in opposition to CAFTA.

Let me just give the first introductory statement. It says: "Dear Members of the United States Congress, the CAFTA market has fewer than 9.2 million people who can buy U.S. goods."

Now, this is a long letter. It is signed by seven members of the Central American assemblies, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Honduras.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go to the last paragraph of the letter from those members of the elected bodies of those countries. And this is what it says in the close of their letter, not mine, but their letter: "CAFTA is a bad trade deal because it puts the interests of international corporations ahead of the welfare of the working poor and the poor in Central America. If CAFTA is

approved, the social instability that CAFTA supporters like to use as a reason for approving the agreement will come not from outside forces, but from the pressures created by the millions of displaced workers who will fall further into poverty."

It is time to say "no" to CAFTA and begin negotiating a new trade agreement that takes into account the region's need for development and real opportunity for its citizens. We respectfully ask you for your support of our people and vote "no" on CAFTA.

Mr. Speaker, again this is from seven people from different countries who represent their people in Central America who are opposed to this agreement.

Let me now go, in the few minutes I have left, to a joint statement concerning the United States Central American Free Trade Agreement by the Bishops' Secretariat of Central America and the chairman of the Domestic and International Policy Committees of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

And let me just make a few points that they make in their long letter of opposition. First it says: "In light of the values and principles that we have outlined as well as the situation of the people, we express some of our specific concerns about the potential impact of CAFTA on our countries, especially in Central America."

I am going to just read a few points: "There has not been sufficient information and debate in our countries about the various aspects of CAFTA and its impact on our societies." Another point: in the area of agriculture, there is insufficient attention given to such sensitive issues as the potential impact that U.S. farm supports on Central America farm products. It seems like that poor farming communities in Central America will suffer greatly when subsidized agricultural products from United States expand their reach into these markets.

Another point made by the bishops: while certain labor and environmental provisions are included in the agreement, it is not clear that the enforcement mechanisms within CAFTA will lead to stronger protections of fundamental worker rights and the environment.

Then there is one other point that I want to read, Mr. Speaker. This, again, was from the Catholic Bishops of Central America and the Catholic Bishops of America: the treaty will have effects on intellectual property rights. The proposed legal framework could jeopardize a right of Central American countries to exercise proper stewardship of their natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight because in my State of North Carolina, I was not here when NAFTA passed back in 1992, enacted in 1993, but we have lost over 200,000 jobs in North Carolina. In the country of America, we have lost better than 2.5 million jobs since NAFTA was enacted in 1993.

I did not vote for Trade Promotion Authority. I did not think President

Bush should have it, nor Clinton. I am not for trying to enable the Chinese to have all of the manufacturing, all of the moneys, and to build their military like they are doing. That is of great concern to many Americans in this country.

Mr. Speaker, to my left there is an article that was in a paper in one of my counties in eastern North Carolina about 4 months ago. And it says: VF Jeanswear closes plant. Operations performed in Wilson, North Carolina, which included fabric cutting and finishing garments will be moved to Central America. Quite frankly, it is going to Honduras.

Four hundred forty-five American citizens lost their jobs. They are going to Central America without even CAFTA. I do not know what it takes for this Congress to understand that if this country becomes a second-rate manufacturing country, then we can place our orders for airplanes and tanks from China.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that I do not live long enough to see that happen. But I am afraid it is going to happen. CAFTA is not good for the American people. It is not even good for the people in these five Central American countries. They need to redraw this amendment. I think I can support an amendment if it were fair to America and fair to Central America.

Let us bury CAFTA next week or this week, and God bless America and our men and women in uniform.

The letter previously referred to follows:

JULY 19, 2005.

DEAR MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS:

THE CAFTA MARKET HAS FEWER THAN 9.2 MILLION PEOPLE WHO CAN BUY U.S. GOODS

President Bush claims that the CAFTA countries represent a growing market for U.S. goods. Unfortunately, this claim is far from the truth. A document prepared by CEPAL (the Economic Commission for Latin America-United Nations) entitled, "Development Objectives of the millennium, A Glance from Latin America and the Caribbean," June 10, 2005, reveals that of a population of 46 million people in the five Central American countries and the Dominican Republic, 25.6 million are poor. Only 20.4 million people are considered non-poor people. These numbers show that the open market of 44 million people that Pres. Bush claims will buy U.S. made goods does not exist. The majority of Central Americans are too poor to be able to afford U.S. made goods.

Furthermore, the majority of those who are considered non-poor (20.4 million people), are not secure market for most of the higher end goods and services that the North American companies want to export. This fact has been established by the same study CEPAL which affirms that 20 percent of those 46 million people, control more of 50 percent of the income; this can only mean that only 9.2 million people are the real market for U.S. companies. This is the same market that it is already shared with companies of the region, Europe and Asian countries who export to the region.

The low competitive advantage that companies of the Central American region have (i.e., low technology, high interest rates on financing, low skilled workforce), compared

to the U.S. companies, will mean that the majority of small and large domestic firms will be devastated, subsequently generating more unemployment and less purchasing capacity for the rest of the population.

As in the case of the agro-business products, the level of asymmetry between the subsidized U.S. agro-products, and the non-subsidized Central American products, the situation of displacement is even worse. On its own account, the U.S. Department of Commerce forecast that the present levels of U.S. production will increase by more than 20 billions dollars in the first nine years of the implementation of CAFTA. More exports of U.S. goods to the region, while it is seen as a benefit for U.S. farmers, only means more displacement of the Central American agricultural production, the destruction of the already vulnerable food industry capacity of the region. This further aggravates the levels of poverty and unemployment of million of central American farmers in the region, who are already facing a very difficult economic and social crisis due to the lack of rural development policies by their own governments.

Therefore based on these facts, we believe the following: CAFTA will only lead to more social instability in the region as more medium and small farmers will lose their livelihoods and become part of the poor population numbers; CAFTA will bring a weakening of the already vulnerable democratic processes in Central America as more people are excluded from the productive sectors of the economy. More exploitation of workers in the formal sectors of the economy will only lead to further social unrest all through the region; CAFTA will only lead to more migration to the U.S. as more people are unable to make a living working on the rural areas, and the jobs perspectives in the cities do not improve. The 20 million who are currently poor, and those that will be further displaced, will turn to immigration to the U.S. as the only solution to their economic problems. Just like the U.S. has seen an increase of immigrants from Mexico after NAFTA, more central American will turn to migration to the U.S.

As Legislative Representatives of the region, who represent a diverse perspective of political views, we respectfully ask you to vote NO on CAFTA. Some of our countries already approved the agreement (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras), others have not (Costa Rica and Dominican Republic); however, in all of the region, there has been real opposition to the agreement with mass protest from all the sectors. And the opposition keeps growing all through the region because this treaty threatens to weaken the already vulnerable democratic institutions that were created during the long conflicts of the 80s.

Our countries want trade, but not trade agreements like CAFTA that limit the possibilities for our countries to enact policies that will truly develop our economies and improve the lives of our people.

CAFTA is a bad trade deal because it puts the interest of international corporations ahead of the welfare of the working poor and the poor in Central America. If CAFTA is approved, the social instability that CAFTA supporters like to use as a reason for approving the agreement, will come not from outside forces, but from the pressures created by the millions of displaced workers who will fall further into poverty. It is time to say NO to CAFTA and begin negotiating a new trade agreement that takes into account the region's needs for development and real opportunity to all its citizens.

We respectfully ask you for your support of our people and Vote NO on CAFTA!

Sincerely,

REP. SALVADOR ARIAS,

National Legislative Assembly, El Salvador.

REP. HUGO MARTINEZ, National Legislative Assembly, El Salvador.

REP. FERNANDO GONZALEZ, National Legislative Assembly, El Salvador.

REP. ALBA PALACIOS, National Legislative Assembly, Nicaragua.

REP. ORLANDO TARDENCILLA, National Legislative Assembly, Nicaragua.

REP. OTONIEL FERNANDEZ GONZALEZ, National Legislative Assembly, Guatemala.

REP. DORIS GUTIERREZ, National Legislative Assembly, Honduras.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 525, SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH FAIRNESS ACT OF 2005

Mr. SESSIONS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109-183) on the resolution (H. Res. 379) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 525) amending title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to improve access and choice for entrepreneurs with small businesses with respect to medical care for their employees, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 22, POSTAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. SESSIONS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109-184) on the resolution (H. Res. 380) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 22) reforming the postal laws of the United States, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to speak out of order for 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from the Virgin Islands?

There was no objection.