

Rothman Opposes Peru Free Trade Agreement

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Congressman Rothman Opposes Peru Free Trade Agreement

(Washington, DC)—Today, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) announced his opposition to the Peru Free Trade Agreement, which seeks to expand the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to Peru. A vote on this legislation is expected in the House of Representatives next week. Although proponents of the Peru FTA tout minor concessions from the President, Rothman says the bill remains 'fundamentally flawed.' Both American and Peruvian workers cite serious concerns with the agreement, which is opposed by labor, consumer advocates, human rights, women's rights, and environmental watchdog organizations.

"I intend to vote against the fundamentally flawed Peru Free Trade Agreement. It includes many of the same provisions from the original NAFTA that left workers terribly unprotected, led to the outsourcing of millions of U.S. jobs, and allowed companies to ignore environmental protections here and abroad that are vital to people's health and safety," said Rothman.

In particular, the weak labor regulations in the Peru FTA would enable U.S. businesses to outsource U.S. jobs to Peru, where executives can drive down wages and working conditions. Enforcement of labor protections would depend on Executive Branches in both countries that have been hostile to workers' rights. Likewise, as small and medium-scale businesses will close in favor of large factories without labor protections, Peruvian women living in poverty are likely to see their situations worsen.

"The bottom line is that this is another bad trade agreement. It's going to hurt workers here and in Peru and only help big corporations cut jobs, save labor costs, and make greater profits," said Rothman. "I'll be proud to cast a no vote on this agreement next week."

Rothman notes that consumer safety would also be endangered by the Peru FTA, which contains language requiring the U.S. to accept imported food even though does not meet our safety standards. "If everyone would take a step back and think about this for a minute, then I don't see how they could pass yet another agreement that allows unsafe food to reach our dinner tables," he said.

On the environmental front, claims that the Peru FTA fixes problems in NAFTA and the Central American Free Trade Agreement are also wrong. Foreign investors in the U.S. will still be able to stymie important environmental policies, such as those that ban toxins and ensure mining practices do not pollute local water streams. In addition, the Peru FTA establishes new rights for logging, mining and oil companies to avoid foreign courts and other legal safeguards.

Finally, and of special interest to New Jerseyans who live and work near Port Newark/Elizabeth, trade experts at Public Citizen argue that the Peru FTA would provide Dubai Ports World (DPW) with a new right to "acquire and operate" landside port activities within the U.S. "As a foreign investor incorporated and operating in Peru, DPW would have immediate standing to use the FTA's foreign investor tribunals if the Peru FTA goes into effect," says the organization.

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