

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, the Republic Leadership has insisted on bringing the proposed Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) before the House tonight. CAFTA tacitly endorses labor and environmental conditions in Central America that would be illegal in the U.S.

CAFTA allows goods produced under these conditions to unfairly compete with the Imperial County sugar growers, of my district. If we pass this agreement, American farmers and ranchers that comply with U.S. environmental and labor standards will be at a grave disadvantage in the global economy.

My district which encompasses the border of California and Mexico, has felt the negative impact from the failure of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). My district has seen NAFTA's promises broken, translating free trade into poverty; increasing social inequality; and creating severe environmental degradation.

The current CAFTA proposal would expand on NAFTA's failures, and send the wrong message: labor and environmental standards are not as important as producing cheap goods under horrible labor conditions.

At the minimum CAFTA should call for basic labor standards including child labor protections, and environmental standards. Make no mistake about it, CAFTA is not about national security, it's about the exploitation of cheap labor!

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose approval of the US-Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA).

On the floor today we are considering a far reaching and important trade agreement with our Central American neighbors, and yet we will only spend two hours debating DR-CAFTA. I am disappointed that more time was not provided to debate this highly controversial legislation. We will have spent more time this week naming various post offices than seriously debating this trade agreement. This is simply wrong. When the House considered the North American Free Trade (NAFTA), a full eight hours of debate was allowed. This is how the House should consider such agreements, with meaningful and extended debate.

International trade is not just inevitable, it is a good thing. But lowering the cost of goods and increasing their availability is not the single goal of trade. Trade done right helps lift the global standard of living and works to protect the irreplaceable environment we inherited. Trade is about values. Trade agreements are not just about goods and commodities; they are also about what constitutes acceptable behavior in environmental matters, worker's rights, intellectual property, and so forth. We should make sure we export the goods we produce and not the workers who produce them. Unfortunately, the DR-CAFTA before us today fails these basic tests. The DR-CAFTA does not contain the values we would require in America and that we must help spread in Central America. Even the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has come out in opposition to DR-CAFTA because of its effect on the poor and most vulnerable in Central America.

Each new trade agreement entered into by the U.S. should be very closely scrutinized. Each ought to include the strongest enforceable worker rights, human rights, and environmental safeguards attainable, like those in-

cluded in the U.S.-Jordan agreement of 2000. Each should also include enforceable rules to protect intellectual property rights and guarantee access for U.S.-based corporations to foreign markets. This can be achieved in trade agreements if we enter negotiations with clear principles.

I voted against the Chile and Singapore trade agreements, for example, because the inadequate labor and environmental provisions included in them, in my estimation, failed to meet the negotiating objectives that Congress carefully spelled out in the 2002 law extending fast-track negotiating authority to the President. They did not provide, for example, that trade dispute settlement mechanisms within those free trade agreements afford equivalent treatment to trade-related labor and environmental protection as intellectual property rights and capital subsidies, and the impending DR-CAFTA fails in this regard, too. The agreement between the US and Jordan, on the other hand, is a fine example that good agreements are achievable.

I am deeply troubled by the DR-CAFTA before us today. The DR-CAFTA does not contain strong, enforceable provisions to protect internationally-recognized worker rights. Nor does it have any provisions for environmental safeguards. Such provisions are critical because they both preserve existing labor laws and environmental standards in the affected countries, and because they ensure that American companies will be competing on a more level playing field with our Central American neighbors. Without such provisions, U.S. companies and employees are forced to compete with countries that have inadequate wage, working conditions, or environmental protections. The people of all countries lose in such a "race to the bottom".

Mr. Speaker, I am going to vote no on DR-CAFTA tonight, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, as our nation leads the world into the 21st century, we should not shy away from opportunities to guide and expand global trade. Lowering tariffs and advancing economic engagement among nations not only helps the American economy, it also can provide real opportunity to those in the developing world who are working to eradicate poverty, build their nations and bring prosperity to their people.

It is critical that we build a bipartisan consensus around the importance of trade, which, unfortunately, does not currently exist. Such a consensus requires that trade agreements be balanced and fair for American workers and companies as well as for the nations with which we seek to engage. It also requires that domestic priorities be put in place to assist Americans in transitioning to the global economy.

While I have supported previous free trade agreements, it is with regret that I oppose H.R. 3045, legislation implementing the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) between the United States, the Dominican Republic and five Central American nations: Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. DR-CAFTA does not build the bipartisan consensus we must achieve to succeed in the emerging global economy.

When increasing opportunities through trade, we must be sure to do more to empower the American workforce through a comprehensive and upgraded education and work-

er training policy. The single most important factor in determining America's success in the 21st Century will be maintaining our innovation and creativity.

Over the last few years, the world has become a smaller and more integrated place with technology, which levels the playing field like never before. Greater competition and collaboration exist now between countries, companies, and individuals. Meeting this challenge requires a new set of big ideas. Instead of this Administration being so eager to dismantle the new deal, it should be working with Congress to offer the American people a new "New Deal."

This new "New Deal" should provide working families with the skills to compete successfully in the 21st Century economy. We must renew our commitment to worker training programs, an education investment that emphasizes math, science and engineering, research funding in science and medicine, and a comprehensive broad-band strategy for all America.

Unfortunately, DR-CAFTA fails on a number of fronts. While the Administration has aggressively negotiated intellectual property and investor rights provisions in the agreement, it has simply not taken the same approach to protect workers' rights abroad or address the needs of working families here at home.

DR-CAFTA does not require nations to bring their laws into compliance with the International Labor Organization (ILO) core labor standards, even though the ILO and U.S. State Department have documented numerous areas where the CAFTA countries' laws fail to comply with even the most basic international norms. Further, the agreement lacks critical dispute settlement and enforcement mechanisms for worker rights provisions beyond a normal fine for countries that fail to enforce their own current labor laws. Even this minimal standard is flawed, as DR-CAFTA does not require countries to maintain their current labor laws.

In addition to the inadequate labor provisions in the trade agreement, the Administration has done nothing to prepare hard-working American families for the consequences of increased trade. Rather, the Administration and Congressional Leadership have provided irresponsible tax cuts benefiting the wealthiest one percent of Americans at the expense of investing in education, skills training, and research and development.

Mr. Speaker, economics and trade need not be a zero-sum game; it can be a win-win for everyone involved as long as people have the tools to succeed. I cannot in good faith support an incomplete trade and economic policy that leaves Americans less able to be creative and innovative.

Mr. KILPATRICK of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 3045, the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). My opposition is based on my conclusion that CAFTA is another chapter in trade legislation that will spur job losses, depress American wages, eviscerate laborer's rights, emasculate the environment, and contribute to our nation's deficit.

Recent statistics from the Labor Department indicate that America has lost more than 2.5 million manufacturing jobs since the passage of NAFTA. In my home state of Michigan, we have experienced a net job loss of over 200,000 manufacturing jobs due to exports.