



**Office of the  
United States Trade Representative**

**CAFTA: Strengthening Freedom, Democracy and Security**

*"Our first trade priority is to pass the Central American and Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement, known as CAFTA... Today, a part of the world that was once characterized by unrest and dictatorship now sees its future in free elections and free trade, and we must not take these gains for granted.... By transforming our hemisphere into a powerful free trade area, we will promote democratic governance and human rights and the economic liberty for everyone."*

*-President George W. Bush, May 17, 2005*

- The debate over CAFTA is about much more than trade. The people of Central America have struggled, and many died, because they believed that democracy would bring peace and a better life for them and their children.
- In the 1980s, Central America was plagued by civil war and Communist insurgencies. Today, it is made of fragile democracies that need U.S. support.
- Anti-reform forces in Central America are still active, and the people of the region are asking the United States to help secure the work of democracy through a closer economic relationship.
- **CAFTA is a way for America to support freedom, democracy and economic reform in our own Hemisphere.** Put simply, CAFTA presents a challenge to the United States to complete the work of democracy and peace that we began two decades ago.
- As the elected Presidents of Central America and Dominican Republic said in Washington last week, CAFTA matters most to them because it will strengthen the foundations of democracy by promoting growth and cutting poverty, creating equality of opportunity, fighting crime and reducing corruption.
- To strengthen democracy in the region, its people need to see concrete benefits from economic freedom -- tangible improvements in their daily life. **When a middle class develops and people have a larger economic stake in their society**, they demand more of a say in how that society is run. This is critical for a region's democratic success.
- **U.S. security is connected to development in our neighborhood.** Criminal gangs, drug trafficking, even trafficking in persons create dangerous transnational networks. CAFTA offers a way to treat the cause, rather than just the symptoms, of the problems in our neighborhood.
- As long as there is poverty in Latin America, some will still see a powerful incentive to leave their homes to come to the United States. **CAFTA will ease the crushing poverty that motivates such migration.**