

A Petition To the Next President of the United States: Renegotiate NAFTA

While campaigning, you heard millions of Americans attest to the disappearance of secure industrial jobs, the devastated communities and shuttered small businesses that accompanied that job loss and the growing inequality in wealth and opportunity. You heard the clamor for fair trade instead of unregulated “free trade.” You may even have promised that, if elected, you would renegotiate a treaty that, 15 years after its adoption, is not meeting the social and economic needs of the American people or the needs of most Canadians or Mexicans, for that matter. Campaign rhetoric is not enough; changes are needed in our trade and investment policies. We therefore call upon you, immediately after you take office, to begin renegotiating NAFTA. An overhauled treaty should follow the Principles of Fair Trade (see other side), which should also be integral to future trade agreements and the basis for renegotiating existing trade treaties.

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*We need this information because we have found that elected officials do not respond well to petitions without it. ** Your email address will help us keep you posted on the campaign. We do not sell or share your information. Renegotiate NAFTA is an initiative of the Democratic Socialists of America (www.dsusa.org). Completed petitions should be returned to: Renegotiate NAFTA (www.renegotiatenafta.org), 75 Maiden Lane, Suite 505, New York, NY 10038. (212) 727-8610.

Principles of Fair Trade Applicable to the NAFTA Treaty

Any renegotiation of NAFTA should conform to the following points:

- To safeguard national sovereignty and democratic rights, the Chapter 11 “investor-state” clause, which gives investors the right to sue governments over measures taken in the public interest, should be eliminated. This clause is one of many provisions that favor the rights of foreign investors over the democratic rights of citizens.
- The agreement must return to governments the ability to safeguard food sovereignty by protecting family and small-scale subsistence farmers. Large-scale importation of basic grains into Mexico is a major cause of the economic collapse of rural communities, which forces millions of undocumented migrants to seek work in the USA. Tariffs that offset subsidies on imported agricultural commodities should be permitted.
- Provisions that discourage food safety laws by prohibiting labeling, traceability and identification of country of origin must be repealed. Consumers have the right to know the origins and production methods of their imported foods.
- Nothing in the agreement should prohibit governments from taking measures necessary to protect the environment and natural resources such as water and energy supplies from overuse and exploitation.
- The current weak and unenforceable “side agreement” to protect labor must be replaced by enforceable provisions that fully safeguard workers’ rights in all countries. This is essential to reverse the rapid increase in social and economic inequality that is fueling a “race to the bottom” in living standards.
- The agreement should return to governments the right to use procurement policies to promote national development and job creation. Trade agreements should not limit the ability of governments at any level to support local employment and other social and environmental goods.
- Each country should have the right to preserve its cultural heritage and support an informed citizenry through policies that protect locally produced films, television and other media products.
- Major development assistance should be provided to poorer regions to reduce inequalities and thereby reduce the incentive for residents to relocate to other countries out of desperate economic need. Substantial trade adjustment assistance should be provided to workers and communities in regions suffering from major economic dislocations.
- A new, impartial and transparent mechanism should be developed for settling disputes and should be open to public scrutiny in all affected countries.

All other future or renegotiated treaties for international trade should also adhere to the same principles. Furthermore:

- A complete study and review of the impact of NAFTA should commence immediately. This process should include extensive public and legislative hearings throughout the USA and the other North American countries. Civil society organizations and movements, as well as state and local governments, should be invited to participate in this review.
- The Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) process should be terminated immediately. This attempt to revise NAFTA under the aegis of the large multinational corporations (joined in the North American Competitiveness Council), together with heads of state, without public input or scrutiny, is the polar opposite of the genuine democratic process that is needed to renegotiate NAFTA and develop fair and just treaties.