

## The Maine Citizen Trade Policy Commission

Maine was the first state to pass legislation to establish a **Citizen Trade Policy Commission**. This bi-partisan 22-member panel is charged with investigating the impact of international trade agreements on Maine workers, businesses, small farmers, and environment. Comprised of legislators and citizens representing a variety of constituencies, like farmers, labor, small business, manufacturers, and environmental non-profits, and representatives from Maine State Agencies, the Maine CTPC is a leader nationally in monitoring the impact of trade agreement on the state and speaking up to ensure change is made.

Since the Legislature established the coalition in 2003, the CTPC has helped to support bi-partisan legislation regarding trade gain unanimous support in the Legislature.

Currently, the CTPC works closely with the Governor and his staff to make sure Maine is weighing in together at the national level to change these undemocratic trade rules.

### Why do states care about trade policy?

Free trade agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) contain provisions that allow foreign companies or countries to challenge local, state or federal laws or policies they don't like. They can claim the laws are "barriers to trade" and then sue for millions of dollars in lost *future* profits, or the money they claim they would have made had the law not been in place.

It gets worse. These cases are not heard in our domestic courts, but rather in closed door international trade tribunals.

Important environmental and public health and safety laws are all vulnerable to challenge. Countries and states that lose their case have to either overturn their law or pay a huge fine.

#### **Examples of state sovereignty undermined by free trade agreements:**

- California banned the additive MTBE from gasoline because it was contaminating groundwater. Methanex, a Canadian company that manufactures MTBE, sued the U.S. under NAFTA because of California's law.
- A state legislator in Maryland received a letter at his home from the People's Republic of China warning him that they would challenge his bill to limit lead in children's products. A state legislator in Vermont also received a letter at her home from the People's Republic of China, warning the same regarding her bill on the recycling of electronics.
- A town in Mexico tried to stop a toxic waste facility from polluting their water source, but they were sued under NAFTA by the company. They lost their case.
- ME laws about procurement, public health, and environmental protection are vulnerable. **Maine policies on LNG, water extraction, pharmaceutical purchasing, kid's products, and insurance regulation are threatened by these trade rules.**

Although we don't set trade policy at the state level, Maine is speaking out to fix trade policy so it better benefits our economy, workers, businesses, and state sovereignty.