

Citizen Trade Policy Commission

April, 22, 2005

State House, Room 126, Augusta

Meeting Summary

Members present: Sen. Margaret Rotundo (co-chair), Rep. Deborah Hutton, Matt Schlobohm, Paul Volckhausen, Dr. Robert Weiss, Bjorn Claeson, Mark Haggerty, Cynthia Phinney, Mary Ellen Johnston, Wade Merrit (on behalf of Richard Coyle)

Members absent: Sen. Raye, Sen. Bryant, Rep. Patrick, Rep. Carr, Barbara Van Burgel, James Wilfong, Elizabeth Wyman, Jim Dusch, Richard Coyle, Vanessa Santarelli

Staff present: Curtis Bentley, Legislative Analyst

I. Introductions

Sen. Rotundo convened the Commission meeting and asked Commission members to introduce themselves.

II. Briefing from Lisa Reinhalter

Lisa Reinhalter presented her preliminary findings from her telephone interviews with Commission members regarding the purpose, mission and challenges of the Commission. Ms. Reinhalter informed the Commission that these findings will be presented in her research paper that she will provide to the Commission in May. Her preliminary findings are attached.

III. Discussion of Annual Report and Assessment

Report: The Commission agreed to develop the report and that it should detail what the Commission has done over the past year and include public hearing notes and meeting minutes.

Assessment: The Commission established an “assessment subcommittee” to work with the three other subcommittees to determine the form and subject matter of the assessment. The assessment subcommittee was directed to consider the input provided by the other three subcommittees and to give its recommendations for the assessment to the Commission at the May 27th meeting. The assessment subcommittee includes Cynthia Phinney, Bjorn Claeson and Dr. Wiess. The Commission agreed to use those recommendations to develop a package of information and ideas to be used by an outside organization such as the Forum on Trade and Democracy to do a deeper assessment based on the direction and information provided by the Commission. The Commission directed staff to find out whether or not contracting with an outside source for the assessment would be require that it go through a bidding process.

IV. Scheduling the Next Meeting and Public Hearing.

The Commission will meet on May 27th in Augusta and will set the date for its next public hearing at that meeting. The Commission requested that a discussion of how the Commission can do a better job of reaching out to all sides of the issues surrounding trade agreements including educational efforts, be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

Guests. The Commission was informed by Wade Merrit that Christina Sevilla from the Office of the United States Trade Representative has verbally agreed to attend a meeting of the Commission. Mr. Merrit will check her availability for the May 27th meeting. If she is unavailable the Commission would like to have Peter Collins attend the next meeting. The Commission agreed to invite guests that have expertise in economics and that can provide an economic overview of Maine's economy and how trade agreements and other factors have shaped that economy. It was also agreed to invite someone with expertise in labor matters that can provide information about how Maine's labor force and how it has been affected by trade agreements and other factors over the years. Members cited a number of people who are potential guests and staff was directed to work with Commission members to make necessary arrangements.

VI. NCSL Meeting Report Back and IGPAC Membership.

Rep. Hutton provided the Commission with a brief overview of the National Conference of State Legislatures meeting held in April 2005 in Washington D.C. regarding states and international trade agreements. Among other things, Rep. Hutton reported that there was extreme concern among all states regarding trade agreements and in particular state sovereignty issues. Rep. Hutton also informed that Commission that it might be possible to get a representative from the northeast on IGPAC and that Elizabeth Wyman is a potential candidate, however, the process for placing someone on IGPAC is unclear at this time. The Commission unanimously voted to support Elizabeth Wyman's induction into IGPAC. Rep. Hutton provided the Commission with documents from the meeting and Wade Merrit provided the remarks of Ambassador Peter Allgeier, both are attached.

VII. GAO Study.

The Commission voted unanimously to have Rep. Hutton and Wade Merit draft language to ask Sen. Snowe to request the GAO to study the relationship between the USTR and the states. Once the initial language is drafted they will circulate it to members by email for comment. If there consent about sending the letter it will be sent out directly however, if there is dissent among members, it will held and discussed at the Commission's next meeting. Mr. Merrit stated that the USTR has been asked to convene a meeting of SPOCs to talk about issues regarding communications between the USTR and the states. Wade Merrit stated that SPOCs across the nation are frustrated with the current process.

VIII. Legislation.

The legislative subcommittee presented its recommendations to the Commission and the Commission voted unanimously to:

1. Have staff research any potential legal problems that may need to be addressed before adopting the recommended legislation;
2. Directed the legislative subcommittee to meet with Allen Sterns to ensure the Governor has no concerns regarding the recommended legislation; and
3. If the Governor has no concerns, directed staff to draft language to carry out the recommendations.

The subcommittee's recommendations are attached.

IX. CAFTA Statement.

The Commission voted unanimously to put together a subcommittee to draft a letter to the Governor, USTR and Maine's Congressional Delegation that strongly states the Commission's support of international trade but based on the following concerns and two public hearings the Commission cannot support CAFTA. Those concerns among other are:

1. Maine's sovereignty;
2. Health issues in Maine and abroad;
3. Environmental impacts;
4. Effectiveness of treaties;
5. CAFTA not beneficial to many small businesses;
6. Intellectual property issues;
7. The process used to negotiate CAFTA;
8. Other similar trade agreements' unintended consequences; and
9. CAFTA is not a fair international trade agreement.

The Commission directed the subcommittee (Matt Schlobohm, Mary Ellen Johnston and Bjorn Claeson) to draft a letter that encompasses in more detail the sentiments and concerns listed above and send it to members via email. If there is agreement on its contents it should be sent out ASAP but if there is dissent the letter will be held until it can be discussed at the next meeting.

X. Funding Sources.

The Commission agreed that it can't rely on General Fund money and needs to look for outside funding sources. The Commission discussed possible sources of funding such as The Noyce Foundation, Maine Initiatives and the Hood Foundation. The Commission discussed needs that would require additional funding such as staffing, additional meetings, travel etc. There was discussion about developing a plan with a long-term vision that would identify funding needed to meet that vision. Sen. Rotundo suggested members individually initiate conversation with potential funding sources and Rep. Hutton suggested that when Sen. Rotundo and Rep. Patrick meet with the Forum on Democracy and Trade in May they discuss possible funding sources. Matt Schlobohm suggested the Commission draft a letter of inquiry for funding sources. The Commission directed staff to check for any potential legal problems with nonprofits making grants to governmental entities.

XI. Adjournment.

The Commission adjourned its meeting at approximately 2:00PM without convening subcommittees.