

Maine Citizen Trade Policy Commission



Senator Margaret Rotundo, Co-Chair

Representative John Patrick, Co-Chair

November 6, 2006

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Maine's Citizen Trade Policy Commission to Hold Public Hearing on the Impact of International Trade Agreements on Northern Maine

AUGUSTA – The Citizen Trade Policy Commission, a nonpartisan commission, announces that it will seek public input on international trade agreements at a public meeting in Presque Isle on November 30, 2006, at City Hall starting at 6:00 PM. This hearing is the latest in a series of public hearings around the State held by the commission to get input from citizens about how international trade agreements are playing out on the local level. “The commission is eager to find out from the people of northern Maine how international trade agreements are impacting them. We are interested in learning about the positive and negative impacts of these agreements on northern Maine,” said Lewiston State Senator Margaret Rotundo, co-chair of the Commission.

Despite the federal nature of international trade agreements the Commission stresses that states are not necessarily relegated to the sidelines and that public input can and does have an affect on what happens at the federal level. “Even though international trade agreements are solely within the jurisdiction of the federal government, that doesn’t mean Maine has no say in the matter. Because of the Commission’s work we now have an open dialogue with the Office of the United States Trade Representative and Maine’s Congressional Delegation, and we are in the unique position of being able to take the concerns and ideas expressed by Maine’s citizens and elevate those concerns to the federal level. We have done this in the past with positive results and we will certainly continue to do so in the future. Here at home we work closely with the Governor to speak with ‘one voice’ to federal officials and often that voice is a direct expression of what we hear from the public,” remarked Senator Margaret Rotundo.

At the public hearing, the Commission will ask attendees to speak about their experiences, both positive and negative, regarding international trade agreements. The Commission welcomes all comments and hopes that participants will be able to provide specific examples about the local impact trade agreements are having on business, labor, healthcare, the environment and municipal

governance. “When properly worded, international trade agreements should help level the playing field in the global market place without sacrificing jobs and our ability to govern at home,” said Rumford State Representative John Patrick, co-chair of the Commission. “I don’t believe existing trade agreements are working out entirely the way the federal government has promised and many people are frustrated with the current process used to negotiate trade agreements.

The Commission has statutory authority to introduce legislation into the Maine State Legislature to address the impacts of trade agreements at the state level when appropriate. “We are continuing to look at Maine state laws to determine if there are ways to make changes to the law in a way that enhances the positive side and reduces the negative aspects of current trade agreements,” said Representative Patrick. “I strongly encourage people to come to the public hearing and voice not only their concerns but possible solutions that may be implemented at the state level.”

The Citizens Trade Policy Commission was established by the Legislature in May of 2004 to assess and monitor the legal and economic impacts of trade agreements on state and local laws, working conditions and the business environment; to provide a mechanism for citizens and legislators to voice their concerns and recommendations and to make policy recommendations designed to protect Maine’s jobs, business environment and laws from any negative impact of trade agreements. The commission consists of 17 voting members representing a broad spectrum of interested parties and five nonvoting members from five state governmental departments.

Prior to the public hearing, the commission will hold a one-hour regular meeting at the same locality at 5:00PM to conduct other commission business. The public is welcome to attend the regular meeting and a meeting agenda and additional information about the commission can be found at the Commission’s webpage: <http://www.maine.gov/legis/opla/citpol.htm>