

# CPATH ♦ Center for Policy Analysis on Trade and Health

*Bringing a Public Health Voice to Trade and Sustainable Development*

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## Health Groups Call for A Voice in U.S. Trade Negotiations: Balance Influence by Pharma, Tobacco, Insurance

Nine national health organizations today called on the U.S. Trade Representative to include advocates for the public's health on its Advisory Committees, and to open Committee meetings to public scrutiny. Committee members enjoy significant influence on trade policy, according to a report by the Government Accountability Office. Committees currently include representatives of the pharmaceutical, tobacco, health insurance, alcohol and processed food industries. The Committees are legally required to present fairly balanced views on trade negotiations. There are no representatives of organizations concerned with the effects of international trade on health.

Congress is currently debating controversial provisions of the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) that would protect high prices for drug companies, and that could destabilize health care systems. Seven of 15 members of the relevant advisory committee represent the pharmaceutical industry.

Tobacco control organizations issued a similar request for representation, noting that the USTR receives imbalanced advice through its committees. The chair of the consumer goods advisory committee is a tobacco company executive.

“Time and again Congress has directed the USTR to negotiate trade policies that protect public health, including access to affordable prescription drugs and protection from tobacco products,” said Ellen R. Shaffer, Co-Director of the Center for Policy Analysis on Trade and Health (CPATH). “But corporations provide undisclosed day-to-day advice on trade negotiations, resulting in proposals that adversely affect health, and create dissension with U.S. trading partners.”

“The USTR must hear from organizations concerned with the effects of international trade on the health of individuals, communities and vulnerable populations,” according to CPATH Co-Director Joe Brenner. Brenner was the lead author of a CPATH report documenting imbalance on the Advisory Committees.

Congress appointed Rob Portman as the new USTR on April 29. The public health groups asked for a response to their request within 30 days. The organizations are: CPATH, American College of Preventive Medicine, American Public Health Association, American Nurses Association, California Conference of Local Health Officers, Doctors for Global Health, National Association of Community Health Centers, Physicians for Human Rights, and Physicians for Social Responsibility.

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