

CPATH ♦ Center for Policy Analysis on Trade and Health

Bringing a Public Health Voice to Trade and Sustainable Development

Ways and Means Committee Hearing on Trade Advisory Committees *Public Health Representation on Advisory Committees Will Be Highlighted*

On Tuesday, July 21, 2009, the House Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade will hold a hearing on how the system of U.S. trade advisory committees is functioning, and on how to increase transparency and public participation in the development of U.S. trade policy. **The hearing will take place at 10:a.m., in Room 1100, Longworth House Office Building.**

The hearing will examine the development of trade policy from several perspectives. **CPATH Co-Director Ellen R. Shaffer** has been invited as a witness to testify on the issue of public health representation on U.S. trade advisory committees. CPATH has issued influential reports documenting the role of health-related industries and the absence of public health representation on U.S. trade advisory committees, and with partner public health organizations, has coordinated a national campaign for public health representation. CPATH's analysis found that health-related industries have significantly increased their representation on advisory committees, from 27 representatives in 2005 to 65 in 2009.

In May, **Reps. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)** and **Lloyd Doggett (D-TX)** introduced legislation, praised by public health groups, which would increase public health participation in the formation of trade bills. HR 2993 amends the Trade Act of 1974 to require that a Public Health Advisory Committee be added to the influential Second Tier of the Federal Trade Advisory Committee System with a strong presence by nongovernmental public health organizations. The advisory system has three tiers with the Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations (ACTPN) on the first tier and the Industry Trade Advisory Committees (ITACs) on the third tier. The legislation also paves the way for greater public health representation on the ITACs.

The Ways and Means hearing aims to explore broadening the range of views represented on trade advisory committees, and to enable these committees to provide more timely and useful recommendations. The Subcommittee is also requesting testimony on steps that could be taken to encourage public outreach and promote greater public engagement in U.S. trade policy.

BACKGROUND FROM THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS:

Established under the Trade Act of 1974, the trade advisory committee system is intended to provide a formal mechanism through which U.S. trade negotiators receive information and advice from the private sector with respect to U.S. negotiating positions before and during trade negotiations. Since 1974, the scope of U.S. trade agreements has expanded beyond tariffs and other "border" measures to encompass subjects such as intellectual property rights, food and product safety, environmental regulations and labor rights. The Trade Subcommittee will consider the extent to which public health, environmental, labor, development, and civil society stakeholder perspectives are or should be represented on the advisory committees. In the context of the Trade Act's requirement that advisory committee representation should be "balanced" or "representative," is it appropriate either to establish separate advisory committees devoted to these concerns or to ensure that existing advisory committees include such stakeholders?