



Catholic Social Justice Lobby Endorses New US-Mexico-Canada Agreement: House Democrats Carry A Labor and Drug Pricing Win for Working People & Patients

After months of negotiations, House Democrat leaders working with the U.S. Trade Representative's Office have achieved a significant breakthrough in negotiations, substantially improving the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The final changes, secured by Speaker Pelosi and Chairman Neal, will enhance worker protection and enforcement, remove giveaways to the pharmaceutical industry improving access to affordable prescription drugs, and take steps to protect the environment. While the agreement is not perfect, the changes make the agreement more just, rectifying deep flaws in the original proposal. The new agreement deals a victory to unions, consumer groups and the faith community fighting to improve upon the status quo.

From the beginning of NAFTA trade negotiations, NETWORK Lobby and our faith partners have worked to promote policies benefiting workers, fostering healthy communities and protecting the environment. For 25 years, religious communities have witnessed how NAFTA contributed to significant job losses in key sectors for workers in the U.S., displaced Mexican farmers leading to forced migration, and promoted poor working conditions for workers in industries operating in Mexico. NAFTA worked for large corporations seeking to pad their bottom line at the expense of workers, leaving the rest behind.

The updated NAFTA agreement negotiated by the Trump Administration, under the stewardship of U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, included some important improvements to protect labor and end abusive courts, but fell short of making the dramatic changes needed to bring justice. The Administration's text also significantly expanded protections for pharmaceutical companies which would have locked in high drug prices in the U.S. and exported bad pharmaceutical policies to our trading partners. The newly announced agreement remedies those deficiencies.

Pope Francis said, "Just as the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say "thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills." NETWORK believes we are at a moment when lawmakers must call for the promotion and protection of the common good in articulating a vision for an economy founded on the principles of solidarity, cooperation, justice, human dignity and freedom.

Now is the time to make progress on this agenda by passing the new updated NAFTA. Our work at NETWORK, however, will continue as we promote transformative trade policies that benefit people and the health of our planet.

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice – advocates for justice inspired by Catholic Sisters – educates, organizes, and lobbies for economic and social transformation. They have a 46-year track record of lobbying for critical federal programs that support those at the margins and prioritize the common good. www.networklobby.org