

Maine Legislature Unanimously Passes Resolution Calling for Replacement of "Fast Track" Trade Authority

Resolution Sends Strong Signal to Congress to Fix Nation's Broken Trade Policies and Change Course on Trade

Senator Snowe to Play Crucial Role in Fast Track fight in Congress

Augusta, ME – The Maine Legislature unanimously passed a joint resolution Wednesday calling on Congress not to renew President Bush's "Fast Track" trade authority, reinforcing a prominent theme from the midterm elections: Americans want to change course on trade.

The Fast Track resolution, SP 649, sponsored by Senator Peggy Rotundo, Senator Raye, Rep. Patrick, Rep. Treat and Rep. Gifford, is a message to Congress that "Fast Track" has enabled bad trade deals that limit opportunity for working families and undermine the state legislatures' ability to govern.

Fast Track authority, which is set to expire June 30 of this year, delegates to the President Congress' trade policymaking authority and restricts Congressional oversight by prohibiting Congress from amending trade agreements before ratification and limiting action to an up-or-down vote. Fast Track has enabled passage of controversial trade deals including NAFTA, CAFTA and the World Trade Organization, which have all accelerated a trade and jobs crisis, marked by a near \$800 billion trade deficit and stagnated wages.

The resolution calls for the replacement of Fast Track with a new mechanism that restores Congress' constitutional authority and provides a meaningful mechanism for states in trade policymaking. Under Fast Track-enabled trade pacts, Maine's ability to create and enact its own laws is in jeopardy. Many of these trade deal rules contradict Maine laws that were already democratically enacted by state government.

Senator Rotundo explains, "Adoption of this joint resolution sends a strong signal to our congressional delegation and to the U.S. Trade Representative negotiators of our desire to have a voice in trade issues that impact states. The state's capacity to regulate areas such as gambling, licensing of health care professionals, and the health and safety of all its citizens is at stake."

"Fast Track has delivered bad trade deals that hurt workers, families and communities in Maine and around the country," said Representative Patrick, "Fast Track dismisses checks and balances in the trade policy-making process, and now is certainly not the time to give this administration another blank check to sign more bad trade deals. Congress must let it expire and work to replace Fast Track with a new mechanism that includes a process for obtaining meaningful input from state legislatures."

"Maine's congressional representatives play an important role in the debate over Fast Track and how we can address failed trade deals like NAFTA," said Matt Schlobohm, coordinator of the Maine Fair Trade Campaign. "While it may sound like an inside the Beltway policy tool, Fast Track is an extraordinary device that strips Congress of any meaningful role and has delivered bad trade deals. With this strong message from the state legislature, we're hopeful that Maine's congressional delegation will work to restore Congress' authority and create trade agreements that benefit Maine workers, businesses and our environment."

Senator Snowe will play a crucial role in the Fast Track fight in Congress. Snowe sits on the Senate Finance committee, the committee with jurisdiction over trade issues in the Senate.

The resolution can be viewed here: <http://www.maine.gov/legis/opla/FasttrackRes.pdf>

For more information on the resolution go here:

<http://ianus.state.me.us/legis/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?ID=280024820>