

# Texas Fair Trade Coalition

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## **Don't Mess With Texas: Stop Free Trade's Assault On Our Environment**

Free trade is hurting our environment and setting the stage for even more abuse in the future. Trade agreements like NAFTA and CAFTA, as well as organizations like the World Trade Organization are making it easier to destroy the environment for the sake of a higher profit.

### **Here are some ways that free trade is hurting the environment:**

- *Foreign investors can challenge environmental law*

Both NAFTA and CAFTA allow for foreign investors to sue state and federal governments for taking actions that would harm their profit. Since NAFTA was enacted foreign companies have sued governments for prohibiting the use of pesticides harmful to the human reproductive system, for removing a gasoline additive that was contaminating California's drinking water, and for the implementation of industrial waste disposal laws, in addition to a number of other cases. Now, the Bush administration is trying to write similar policies into pending free trade agreements with other countries.

- *Free trade agreements are allowing corporations to exploit our water supply*

Under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) corporations are able to take ownership of fresh-water in all of its forms, including ice and snow. Since water is defined as a good, it is protected under all subsequent free trade agreements, including NAFTA, CAFTA, and the WTO. This not only allows corporations to export huge amounts of water in bulk with no concern for its environmental impacts, it also allows those corporations to claim ownership over naturally occurring water sources. For example, in Cochabamba, Bolivia a corporation took control of the city's water supply and charged for access to fresh water. On top of that, they made it illegal for the city's impoverished inhabitants to collect and drink rainwater without paying a fine.

- *Food safety standards decline*

Because free trade agreements put so much emphasis on increasing trade, food safety standards suffer. Foreign-grown produce is one of the first things to be imported en masse after a trade agreement comes into effect. NAFTA imposes strict import quotas on the United States, Canada, and Mexico, yet because these quotas are so high, food inspection services have to cut corners on their inspections in order to satisfy the demand for imports. Additionally, under the WTO, NAFTA, and other agreements, the U.S. government does not require that foods imported into the country meet basic federal safety guidelines.

- *Free Trade Agreements allow more pollution into the United States*

Under NAFTA Mexican trucks are allowed to transport Mexican goods into the United States. Currently they are only allowed to travel 20 miles past the border, and are already having a significant environmental impact. Now the Bush administration, in its attempt to fully implement NAFTA, is pushing to allow Mexican trucks to travel anywhere in the country. These trucks often do not comply with U.S. safety or emissions regulations. In fact, of the over 4.5 million trucks that crossed the border in 2005, only 180,000 were inspected, 21.3% of which were deemed unacceptable by U.S. standards.