



***Congressman William J. Jefferson***  
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## **Congressman Jefferson Announces New Labor Provision for CAFTA**

**(Washington, D.C.)** Today, Congressman William J. Jefferson (D-LA) announced that Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Thomas (R-CA) included a provision in the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) Mark-Up document, which passed today, that will strengthen the labor commitments outlined in the agreement. The provision provides for a labor reporting mechanism that Jefferson hopes will address concerns regarding the agreement's current labor and labor capacity building provisions.

“We have heard many CAFTA critics say that the agreement is a step back from the unilateral preference programs because the FTA will take away the leverage we have to encourage countries to improve their labor standards,” Jefferson said. “Given CAFTA’s already state-of-the-art labor provisions, the inclusion of a 15-year, bi-annual reporting requirement will enable Congress to monitor both the commitments of the U.S. government and those of the DR-CAFTA countries.”

Jefferson’s provision provides for a reporting mechanism that is designed to give Congress leverage to address issues related to commitments on funding; incentives for DR-CAFTA countries to improve their labor laws; and benchmarks for evaluating progress. Further, it also requires the Executive Branch to establish a mechanism to solicit input and include in the report a summary of public comment on:

- US capacity building efforts called for in the CAFTA Agreement;
- US efforts to facilitate the full implementation of the “White Paper” recommendations;
- DR-CAFTA country efforts to comply with the CAFTA Agreement’s labor provisions and their efforts to fully implement the “White Paper” recommendations.

The provision also requires periodic meetings between the U.S. Labor Secretary and DR-CAFTA Labor Ministers to discuss the operations of the agreement’s labor provisions.

“I would like to thank Chairman Thomas for working with me to include this provision in the Mark,” Jefferson said. “I’m confident this will give Congress the appropriate oversight on these critical labor provisions.”