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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 290

Offered January 23, 2004

Memorializing the Congress of the United States to oppose ratification of the Free Trade Area of the Americas Agreement.

Patrons—Griffith (By Request), Armstrong, Black, Carrico and Marshall, D.W.; Senators: Hawkins and Reynolds

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, negotiations by the United States Trade Representative with Central American and South American nations to achieve a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) are far advanced, and are planned for completion by 2005; and

WHEREAS, such a Free Trade Area would constitute a "common market" with little or no tariff and trade barriers, promoting unrestricted movement of capital, people, goods and services across national borders; and

WHEREAS, the United States Congress will be allowed to cast only an up or down ratification vote on the completed Agreement, with no opportunity to offer any amendments; and

WHEREAS, the FTAA is patterned after NAFTA, effective in 1994, which has destroyed 750,000 actual and potential jobs in the United States, has resulted in transfer of thousands of factories overseas, and has depressed the economies of many communities in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, without protections for workers, the FTAA would expand NAFTA's record of "maquila"-style development in which border sweatshops proliferated while approximately 28,000 small businesses in Mexico also shut down; and

WHEREAS, the FTAA would expand NAFTA provisions, which have devastated small and independent farmers in Virginia and the United States as well as Mexico and Canada by favoring huge agribusinesses flooding local markets with cheap imports; and

WHEREAS, the FTAA would limit the ability of cities, counties and states to pass laws on zoning, government contracts and other local issues by setting "top-down" binding laws on all countries; and

WHEREAS, jurisdictions that pass laws seen as blocking trade or otherwise conflicting with FTAA rules could face challenges and fines through a special FTAA tribunal, separate from traditional court systems; and

WHEREAS, NAFTA's so-called "investor protection" provision may give foreign investors more rights than U.S. citizens to sue for compensation over state and local laws that they see as blocking trade and hurting their profits; and

WHEREAS, protecting our borders and getting some handle on the millions of illegal aliens now in our country are already daunting challenges, costing the Commonwealth of Virginia and local governments many millions of dollars, and the FTAA would make this problem infinitely worse by accelerating the collapse of our borders; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Congress of the United States be urged to oppose ratification of the Free Trade Area of the Americas Agreement; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit copies of this resolution to the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the President of the United States Senate, and the members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter.

INTRODUCED

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