

February 25, 2010

Why is Obama's Trade Rep Citing the Chamber of Commerce?

In December, we told you about the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's campaign against the TRADE Act -- legislation to fix NAFTA and the WTO and head in a new direction on trade. The club that includes top corporate culprits like Wal-Mart, Bank of America and others that pushed the failed NAFTA/WTO trade model is lobbying to stop trade reform - that is, when they are not busy trying to kill President Obama's first-term agenda.

So, it was quite a shock this week to learn that Obama's U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Ron Kirk has on his agency's website a direct link, listed as 'trade data', to the Chamber's lobbying materials!¹ This is outrageous.



[Sign our petition urging the Obama Administration to stop citing the Chamber's trade distortions.](#)

[Sign our petition to President Obama's trade representative](#) telling him the Chamber of Commerce's trade distortions should not be cited by this administration. [Then, tell a friend.](#)

The USTR website lists official sources and then only the Chamber as authorities for trade data - no universities, no unions -- just the country's main corporate lobby!

And the Chamber's website is just wrong. It covers only the impact of exports on jobs. Totally missing from the Chamber's site is any mention of the harmful effects of the massive trade deficit that has accrued since its beloved NAFTA, WTO and similar trade deals went into effect. (That would be a trade deficit going from \$25 billion in 1993 to \$263 billion in 2009 with NAFTA countries alone).

Government data show we have lost one out of every four manufacturing jobs since NAFTA and the WTO.² These are not contested numbers. But the Chamber of Commerce's site makes no mention of the over 5 million manufacturing jobs that we've lost out on due to our deficit-inducing trade policy.³ Plus, the Chamber dodges the wage stagnation that has plagued the U.S. during the era of Fast Track and NAFTA/WTO-style trade deals. And that does not even get into all of the horrible import safety problems - tainted food, toys and more - or the trade tribunal attacks on key consumer, toxics and environmental law.

The Obama administration shouldn't be promoting the Chamber's misleading lobbying materials

as 'trade data'. This can't stand. [Sign our petition to Ambassador Kirk today.](#)

Moreover, the Chamber of Commerce spent more than \$140 million in 2009 lobbying against the interests of workers and the environment.⁴ That President Obama would then allow one of his cabinet members to turn around and cite the Chamber on trade is outrageous.

Instead of siding with the leaders of corporate offshoring, the administration could cite data detailing the real impact of our failed trade model from groups like the Economic Policy Institute, AFL-CIO, or us.⁵

[Sign our petition](#) and tell the administration that instead of citing stats from the Chamber of Commerce, they should be working on the real trade reform that's included in the TRADE Act and supported by a majority of House Democrats. [Then, tell a friend.](#)



Thanks for all that you do,

Bill Holland
Deputy Director, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch division

¹ See the [United States Trade Representative](#) website.

² Historical Manufacturing Employment Data - [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

³ Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein, and Heidi Shierholz, [State of Working America 2008-2009](#), (Washington, D.C.: EPI, 2008), Table 3.27 at 191.

⁴ Open Secrets [Lobbying & Spending Database](#) - Chamber of Commerce, 2009.

⁵ Fair trade resources available at [EPI](#), [AFL-CIO](#), or [Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch](#).