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Ralph Nader, Founder

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Dear Member of the 103rd Congress:

International trade issues — especially the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Uruguay Round expansion of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) — are gripping the interest and concern of citizens across the nation. Today's trade agreements are no longer just about tariffs and quotas. Rather, both NAFTA and GATT are expanding their influences into areas normally considered to be in the realm of domestic affairs. As a result, both agreements could undermine numerous U.S. labor, environmental and consumer laws and limit your ability — as an elected representative — to create and enforce such legislation in the future.

Within the first six months of the Congress you could be faced with a vote on NAFTA, and also a vote on the extension of the unusual "fast track" procedure for Congressional consideration of trade agreements. Given the current push by the Bush Administration to complete the Uruguay Round of GATT before the end of this year, a vote on GATT may also come early in the session. These three major votes on trade will be accompanied by an international lobbying campaign in which foreign governments and multinational corporations are expected to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to push for trade agreements which benefit their interests.

Public Citizen, as a leading environmental and consumer advocacy group, and as part of the Citizens' Trade Campaign, a national coalition of over 60 groups collectively representing over 35 million citizens, is concerned that this lobbying effort may obscure the strong concerns many U.S. citizens have with the Uruguay Round of GATT and the NAFTA agreements, as written. (In fact, almost every national U.S. consumer and environmental group has already called for the rejection of the two texts.) Therefore, we have prepared this briefing book, which explores the environmental and consumer problems in GATT and NAFTA, provides information on fast track and sovereignty issues and contains a glossary of technical trade language. We hope you find it a useful resource.

Please contact us or any of our coalition partners (see list on reverse) for more information. Also, we look forward to seeing you at the Citizens' Trade Campaign's trade briefing, which will be held shortly after the session begins.

Sincerely,

Joan Claybrook
President, Public Citizen

Lori Wallach
Director, Public Citizen's Trade Program