

WASHINGTON, D.C., 12:04 A.M. EST – H.R. 3045, the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act just passed in the United States House of Representatives by the slimmest of majorities, 217 to 215. Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31), the only Southern Californian on the House Committee on Ways and Means, which oversees our nation's trade policies, voted against the bill.

Below is Rep. Becerra's speech as delivered on the floor during debate on H.R. 3045:

“President Ronald Reagan said it best: ‘Trust, but verify.’ On CAFTA, that’s all we’re asking. I believe the governments of Central America want to prove that they can play by the rules in the international marketplace. But before we agree to open up America’s markets – and that means American jobs – to fierce competition, we must know that the rules will be followed and enforced.

“‘Trust, but verify.’ An agreement that merely says ‘enforce your existing laws’ fails President Reagan’s test.

“The truth is, if we were to tell the American public that we were preparing to open up our markets to further international competition based on the good faith of our competitors, the

American people would run us out of Washington. Just as no consumer today would buy or sell a house on a handshake, neither should we open our markets with one.

“When we shook hands with China and allowed them to receive favored trading status with America, did we expect that they would respond by pirating American goods, or by paying industrialized wages of \$0.60 an hour? That’s the kind of cutthroat competition that CAFTA will permit. But this time that kind of distorted competition will live and breathe in our neighboring countries, not 6,000 miles away. You tell me, will our Central American neighbors feel the pressure to trade under America’s standards, or China’s standards?”

“No one wins in a race to the bottom. The vast majority of people in the CAFTA countries – the workers, the farmers, the small merchants – would not win, and U.S. businesses certainly would not win in the long run.

“It is better to lift all boats so we can trade as partners and equals. I recognize the importance of trade in this hemisphere. I have supported legislation for every free trade agreement that has come before me in my 12 years in congress. Regrettably, this is not a trade agreement that rewards work in America or in Central America; it is not an agreement that lifts all boats. Vote against this CAFTA.”

Becerra.house.gov