

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. House of Representatives passed the House/Senate compromise version of the Trade Bill of 2002 (H.R. 3009) by a three-vote margin (215-212) early Saturday morning, July 27, 2002. Under this legislation Congress temporarily grants some of its Constitutional authority to the President in order to conduct foreign trade negotiations. Congress then can only accept or reject legislation that implements trade agreements negotiated by the President, but cannot amend such legislation.

Representative Xavier Becerra (CA - 30), the only congressional member from Southern California who is on the House Ways and Means Committee and its Subcommittee on Trade, voted against the bill granting trade authority to the President, citing its inability to meaningfully address issues such as labor and the environment, and its failure to assist the displaced workers that would inevitably lose their jobs in some sectors as a result of future trade agreements.

Below are excerpts from Rep. Becerra's floor speech during the debate:

"Some call it trade promotion authority. Some call it fast track. I call it a missed opportunity. We had a chance to meaningfully promote the elimination of abusive child labor practices by our trading partners. We had a chance to protect our domestic laws on the environment and on consumer protection. We had a chance to advance progressive trading practices by eliminating barriers and tariffs to productive trade among our international friends.

"But instead, this conference report favors foreign investors over U.S. citizens and businesses in this country. It extracts the teeth from the enforcement provisions meant to prevent unscrupulous foreign businesses willing to violate their country's laws and our laws, and this conference report sidesteps our responsibility to the displaced workers and impacted communities that we know will result from this legislation."

The Senate is expected to take up the House-passed conference report this week. After Senate passage, the bill would move on to President Bush's desk for a signature. The President has indicated that he would sign the bill.