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# SAN FRANCISCO LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO



1188 FRANKLIN STREET, SUITE 203, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94109-6852 • 415/440-4809 • FAX 415/440-9297

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Walter L. Johnson

## Resolution Expressing Solidarity with Costa Rican Labor Movement for its Efforts to Stop Ratification of CAFTA

WHEREAS, ratification of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) is currently pending before the Congress of Costa Rica, whose citizens, led by the labor movement, have engaged in a determined effort to stop its approval; and

WHEREAS, the impact of CAFTA on the Dominican Republic and the other Central American countries that have already approved the treaty has been devastating for small farmers and low-paid workers in the textile and other labor intensive industries; and

WHEREAS, corporate backers of CAFTA seek to use it as a vehicle to privatize the large, highly unionized public sector in Costa Rica that includes state ownership of insurance, telecommunications, electricity distribution, petroleum distribution, water, sewage, and railroad transportation. First to go would be subsidized phone and electrical service for the poor. In addition, CAFTA would likely lead to the dismantling of universal healthcare in Costa Rica and prohibit the government from purchasing low cost generic drugs; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. government and businesses have spent millions of dollars in Costa Rica to elect pro-CAFTA politicians while threatening to punish the entire country if its Congress fails to adopt free trade legislation; and

WHEREAS, the government of Costa Rica has responded to militant protests and general strikes organized by CAFTA opponents with increased police and political repression, including frame-ups of labor leaders like Orlando Barrantes, General Secretary of the banana workers union. Barrantes was recently sentenced to two years in jail and three years probation for his leadership role in the fight for workers rights, land for landless farmers, quality healthcare for the poor and the defeat of CAFTA; and

WHEREAS, widespread popular opposition, expressed in a successful General Strike in October 2006, has led to an impasse over approval of CAFTA and implementing legislation by the Costa Rican Congress; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. labor movement has been outspoken in its opposition to one free agreement after another that puts the interests of multi-national corporate profiteers over the interests of workers, the environment and the public welfare, including NAFTA, FTA, Korean FTA, CAFTA and others; and

WHEREAS, this summer the U.S. Congress will be reviewing free trade agreements with Peru, Colombia and Panama which share the same fundamental pro-corporate, anti-labor, anti-environmental provisions that make them harmful to the lives of workers, indigenous peoples, small farmers and the poor in those countries,

UNITY IS STRENGTH!

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the San Francisco Labor Council applauds the Costa Rican labor movement for its militant leadership in building a strong, united movement against CAFTA, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the San Francisco Labor Council calls of the government of Costa Rica to abandon all attempts to ratify CAFTA and to drop charges against anti-CAFTA activist Orlando Barrantes and others punished for exercising their rights to freedom of speech and association, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the San Francisco Labor Council forward a copy of this resolution to the Central Labor Councils of Alameda, Contra Costa and the South Bay for their adoption and urge their continued opposition to neo-liberal free trade agreements, including calling for the repeal of NAFTA and CAFTA by the U.S. Congress.

Submitted by Lois Scott, IFPTE 21, and adopted by the Executive Committee of the San Francisco Labor Council on July 2, 2007.

Respectfully,



Tim Paulson  
Executive Director