



For Immediate Release

February 17, 2005

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North American Labor Organizations File Challenge to Mexican Labor Law Reforms under NAFTA Labor Side Agreement

Twenty labor organizations from the United States, Canada and Mexico (see complete list below) joined together today to file a legal challenge to the introduction of sweeping labor law reforms in Mexico. The comprehensive, 20-page petition submitted to the U.S. National Administrative Office (NAO) alleges that the proposed reforms flagrantly violate the labor side agreement of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The agreement obligates the three signatory countries to “ensure that [their] labor laws and regulations provide for high labor standards, consistent with high quality and productivity workplaces,” and to “continue to strive to improve those standards in that light.” The reforms are expected to be submitted to the floor of the legislature for a vote soon.

The labor reforms, conceived of by current Labor Minister Carlos Abascal Carranza, greatly weaken core labor rights, such as the right to freedom of association, to organize and bargain collectively and to strike, and create new “flexibilities” that will substantially eliminate overtime pay and lessen job security. The reforms also do nothing to improve many of the laws and practices, previously criticized by the U.S. and Canada NAOs, that violate the worker rights protected under the labor side agreement.

The trade union petitioners are represented by Jeff Vogt of the Washington Office on Latin America. *“The labor reforms are an unparalleled assault on trade union rights and reflect a complete disregard for Mexico’s international and domestic legal obligations,”* said Mr. Vogt. *“If Mexico is allowed to repeal those laws that protect workers and replace them with laws that violate the labor side agreement, ILO conventions and the Mexican Constitution, the obligations assumed by the parties under NAFTA would be rendered utterly meaningless.”*

Petitioners are asking the U.S. NAO to undertake an expedited review of the labor law reforms and to recommend that any provisions found to violate the labor side agreement be rescinded.

Participating Unions:

U.S.: American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Communications Workers of America (CWA), International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), International Association of Machinists (IAM), Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical & Energy Workers International Union (PACE), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), UNITE-HERE, United Auto Workers of America (UAW), United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE), United Steel Workers of America (USWA), and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)

Canadian/Quebec: Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW), Canadian Energy and Paper Workers' Union (CEP), Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), Centrale des Syndicats du Québec (CSQ), Syndicat de la fonction publique du Québec (SFPQ).

Mexico: Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME), Sindicato Unico de los Trabajadores del Distrito Federal, Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (UNT) (Mexico's largest federation of independent trade unions)

Global Union Federations: Public Service International (PSI)