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EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

May 22, 2008

Dear Members of the Assembly Labor Committee:

RE: Please Support A-2754 (Egan), The "Jobs, Trade & Democracy Act"

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO supports the "Jobs, Trade & Democracy Act" and respectfully ask for your support. The bill seeks to promote citizen involvement in trade issues, as well as promoting state sovereignty in regard to international trade, and also establishes a role for the state legislature in analyzing and approving state agreements to international trade agreements. The bill's core mission is to provide a forum and establish a procedure to grant access to trade related information to citizens and state government leaders, as well as promoting communication on this very important issue.

This legislation emerged from the Assembly Outsourcing and Off-Shoring Commission, a bi-partisan legislative commission that has representatives of both business and labor. The Commission recommended enactment of this proposal by a vote of 5, yes; 0, no; and one abstention. Of 22 recommendations made to the Commission, 12 were recommended for enactment, as stated in the Commission's January 7, 2008, report. We thank Assemblyman Egan for serving on this Commission, as well as for his leadership on trade issues and for introducing and posting this bill.

The impetus for this legislation was a desire, on the part of state legislators and local residents and community organizations, to become more involved in international trade deliberations and how states could become active on this issue. As you know, the vast majority of trade policies are created at the federal level, but states certainly do have a role in crafting these policies. This bill embraces the various policies in which states can play a role.

The bill seeks to establish four policies:

1. The creation of a 20 member Citizens Trade Commission, which includes representatives of all stakeholders' organizations, including business and labor;
2. Have the Commission prepare a report to the Governor and Legislature on the impact of trade on the state;
3. Requires legislative consent to bind a state to an international trade agreement; and
4. Establishes bi-partisan legislative points of contact to act as liaisons to the federal government on trade policy.

