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Revised USMCA Improves on Flawed Trump Agreement

The following is a statement from Communications Workers of America President Chris Shelton:

From the start of these negotiations, CWA has been clear about what a successful new trade agreement between the United States, Mexico and Canada should accomplish. First and foremost, it must reverse the incentives corporations have to move jobs from country to country, in search of the lowest wages and weakest labor standards. This includes not only manufacturing jobs, but also call center and other service sector work. It must also include a strong enforcement process to hold the parties accountable to their obligations under the agreement.

The version of the USMCA that President Trump announced last year was deeply flawed. CWA members mobilized to make thousands of phone calls, telling their members of Congress that the agreement was unacceptable and urging them to press for changes. Thanks to the persistence of Democrats like Senators Sherrod Brown and Ron Wyden and Representatives Rosa DeLauro and Jan Schakowsky, negotiations reopened and significant improvements were made to the agreement.

As any experienced union negotiator knows, it's important to read the final text of any agreement before passing judgement on it instead of relying on verbal promises. The actual revised USMCA text contains some modest improvements over NAFTA for working people in all three countries under this agreement.

Thanks to the leadership of Senators Brown and Wyden in particular, new provisions allow for inspections of workplaces suspected of worker rights violations. Unfortunately, the agreement does not include the stronger enforcement measures that they had proposed, especially for call centers. The new agreement also eliminates the provisions in President Trump's deal that would have locked in high medicine prices for consumers across North America.

Our work to address outsourcing, offshoring and economic inequality goes beyond addressing the flaws in our trade agreements. There are actions that the Trump Administration and Congress can take right now that would have an immediate, positive impact for working people and bring jobs back to our country.

Congress should reverse tax policies enshrined in the Republican tax law that reward companies for sending jobs overseas and pass the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act

and the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act to increase the power of working people to join unions and bargain strong contracts. President Trump should sign an executive order preventing federal government contracts from being awarded to companies that offshore U.S. call center jobs and Congress should pass and President Trump should sign the US Call Center Worker and Consumer Protection Act.

The negotiations over the USMCA have shown that our approach to trade policy needs to be fundamentally overhauled to benefit working families, not just multinational corporations. While a net improvement, the USMCA is not a future template for a progressive vision of trade that puts at its core our values of good jobs and rising wages. At CWA, we will continue and increase our cross-border work to build alliances between union members in the United States, Canada and Mexico to monitor the implementation of the agreement and build power together to ensure that the commitments made in the agreement are honored.

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About CWA: The Communications Workers of America represents working men and women in telecommunications, customer service, media, airlines, health care, public service and education, and manufacturing.

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