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STATE OF MAINE

## Citizen Trade Policy Commission

February 5, 2008

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

For more information, Contact: Senator Margaret Rotundo (207) 287-1515 or Representative John Patrick (207) 287-1400

### **Maine Citizen Trade Policy Commission to Hold Public Hearing**

AUGUSTA – The Maine Citizen Trade Policy Commission, , announces that it will seek public input on international trade agreements at a public hearing in South Portland, on February 21, 2008 at South Portland Community Center, 21 Nelson Road, So. Portland, ME. 04106, starting at 6:00 PM. This hearing is the latest in a series of public hearings around the State held by the commission to get input from citizens about how international trade agreements are impacting their lives. Experts in international trade, including U. S. Congressman Mike Michaud, will present their views on the proposed Colombia Free Trade Agreement at the start of the hearing. “This forum not only allows the Commission to get input from the public but also allows those affected by trade to have a direct conversation with policy makers at the state and federal level.,” said Lewiston State Senator Margaret Rotundo, Senate Chair of the Commission.

While international trade agreements are negotiated at the federal level, public input can and does have an affect on what happens in Washington. “Even though the ability to enter into

international trade agreements rests solely with the federal government, that doesn't mean Maine doesn't have a voice in their creation. Because of the Commission's work we now have an open dialogue with the Office of the United States Trade Representative and Maine's Congressional Delegation, and we are in the unique position of being able to share the concerns and ideas expressed by Maine's citizens with them," said Representative John Patrick, House Chair of the Commission.

At the public hearing, the Commission will ask attendees to speak about their experiences, both positive and negative, regarding the impact of international trade agreements, and hopes that participants will be able to provide specific examples about the local benefits and down-sides of trade agreements on business, labor, healthcare, the environment and municipal governance. Written comments can be submitted as well.

"I applaud the Maine Citizen Trade Policy Commission for holding this important public forum on trade. These trade agreements have crippled our economy and devastated our manufacturing base. It's time we develop a new trade model that puts us back on a level playing field," Michaud said. "As co-chair of the House Trade Working Group, I am committed to fighting for fairer trade deals. I look forward to participating in this important dialogue on trade."

The Commission has recently begun to work with other New England Legislatures to increase awareness of the need for states to have input as trade agreements are negotiated.

The Citizens Trade Policy Commission is an non-partisan commission which was established by the Legislature in May of 2004 to assess and monitor the legal and economic impacts of trade agreements on state and local laws, working conditions and the business environment; to provide a mechanism for citizens and legislators to voice their concerns and recommendations and to make policy recommendations designed to protect Maine's jobs, business environment and laws from any negative impact of trade agreements. The commission

consists of 17 voting members representing a broad spectrum of interested parties and five nonvoting members from five state governmental departments.

**Public Hearing Location:**

South Portland Community Center

21 Nelson Road, So. Portland, ME 04106-6410.

Phone No.: 207.767.7650.

For more information about the commission's work and for directions to the South Portland Community Center, please visit: <http://www.maine.gov/legis/opla/citpol.htm>