

For Immediate Release, Contact: Senator Margaret Rotundo (207) 784-3259 or Rep. John Patrick (207) 364-7666

Maine's Citizen Trade Policy Commission Seeks to Give Maine a Prominent Voice in the Negotiations of International Trade Agreements

AUGUSTA – The Citizen Trade Policy Commission announces that it will seek public input on international trade agreements at a public meeting on February 3, 2005 at the Husson College Business Center from 7-9 PM in Bangor. “The Commission is in a unique position to take the concerns and ideas expressed by Maine’s citizens at these public hearings and when appropriate, seek legislative action or to go directly to the United State’s Trade Representative to ensure those concerns and ideas are taken into account when trade agreements are negotiated,” said Senator Margaret Rotundo. “It is all too often the case that Maine’s citizens are adversely affected by trade agreements that they had no idea were entered into by our federal government and are outraged when they are told that there is almost nothing the state legislature can do to make changes to that agreement,” stated Representative John Patrick.

At the public hearing, the Commission will ask attendees to speak out about how international trade agreements have affected them and, in particular, the Commission hopes to receive comments on the Central America Free Trade Agreement (“CAFTA”) currently being negotiated by United States with a number of Central American countries. “This trade agreement will affect how we do business in Maine and now is the perfect time for us to weigh into the negotiations to ensure Maine benefits from this agreement,” Senator Rotundo stated. CAFTA is scheduled to be signed sometime in March of this year.

“We strongly encourage the public to attend the Bangor meeting because their input will help guide our work and help Maine become a more active player in upcoming international trade agreements.” said Representative Patrick. For direction to the Husson College Business Center visit the college’s website at www.husson.edu/directions/.

The Citizens Trade Policy Commission 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 5 nonvoting members from five state governmental departments.