

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: November 16, 2007
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Vermont Commission on International Trade & State Sovereignty:

Public Hearing on the Impact of International Trade Agreements on Vermont's Health Care System

To gather input on the effects of international trade agreements on Vermont's health care system, the Commission on International Trade and State Sovereignty is holding a public hearing. The hearing is scheduled for Tuesday, November 27 from 1 to 4 p.m. in the CVPS/Leahy conference room of the Rutland Regional Medical Center. All are welcome to attend. Though every effort will be made to accommodate those who come, persons wishing to testify are encouraged to sign up in advance by contacting Nedene Martin at TradeCommission@leg.state.vt.us or 828-2231.

Among questions the Commission seeks to answer with the help of public testimony are:

- Do international trade agreements impact Vermont's preferred drug list under the state Medicaid program?
- How do international trade agreements affect the ability of Vermont and other states to seek low-cost prescription drugs through importation from other countries?
- Will international trade agreements impact Vermont's professional licensing standards for doctors, nurses, and other health care providers?
- How has input from interested parties led to changes in the U.S. Trade Representatives' negotiations and trade language addressing health care issues?

This is the third in a series of four public hearings scheduled around the state to share information and gather input about effects on Vermont of international trade agreements. The remaining hearing will focus on agriculture.

Attached is a letter explaining the hearing and offering links to the Trade Commission's web site <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/WorkGroups/Trade/> for more information.

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STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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- Do international trade agreements impact Vermont's preferred drug list under the state Medicaid program? For example, what might result from the fact that Vermont's decision-making process for compiling its preferred drug list may not comply with the procedural provisions of the Australia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA)?
- How do international trade agreements affect the ability of Vermont and other states to seek low-cost prescription drugs through importation from other countries? Could an international trade agreement prevent Vermont from pursuing importation or subject the state to liability?
- Will the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) or other international trade agreements impact Vermont's professional licensing standards for doctors, nurses, other health care providers, and pharmacy benefit managers?
- How has input from interested parties led to changes in the U.S. Trade Representatives' negotiations and trade language addressing health care issues?
- Should the states urge Congress and the U.S. Trade Representative to assure that future international trade agreements contain provisions that require common judicial deference be given to reasonable state and local enactments, including those affecting the provision of health care services and prescription drugs, or what other steps, if any, should the state take in order to protect the health of its people and its health care system?

The Vermont Commission on International Trade and State Sovereignty has been charged with answering these questions and is holding four public hearings around the state so that the public can provide input and learn about international trade agreements and how they affect Vermont. The third of the four public hearings will focus on the impact of international trade agreements on health care in Vermont. The Commission will hold a subsequent hearing focusing on the effect of international trade agreements on agriculture.

The hearing on health care is scheduled for Tuesday, November 27 from 1 to 4 p.m. in the CVPS/Leahy conference room of the Rutland Regional Medical Center. The Commission will provide a general overview of international trade agreements and their relation to health care. In addition, the Commission will seek input from the public regarding their experiences and knowledge of international trade agreements and how such agreements impact the state and its health care, prescription drug, and health insurance systems. All are welcome to attend. Though every effort will be made to accommodate those who come, persons wishing to testify are encouraged to sign up in advance by contacting Nedene Martin at TradeCommission@leg.state.vt.us or 828-2231.

To help prepare for the public hearing, a short overview of international trade agreements and their specialized terminology is available on the Commission's web site at <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/WorkGroups/Trade/>. If you plan to attend and participate in the hearing, please focus your testimony or input on Vermont-specific information.

International trade agreements can have a substantial impact on Vermont and its citizens. Please join the Commission on International Trade and State Sovereignty at the November 27, 2007 hearing and subsequent meetings to learn about international trade agreements and to help the Commission understand how such agreements affect you. If you are interested in speaking at the public hearing or providing documents or materials, please contact Nedene Martin at 828-2231.