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CAFTA

Key voters come out against pact

BY JIM ABRAMS

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WASHINGTON - Four Democratic representatives who are crucial swing votes in Republican efforts to win approval of a free-trade pact with Central America said Wednesday they would oppose the agreement because of what they consider weak labor provisions.

"As ardent supporters of fair trade, we cannot support the existing proposal and we call upon the president to go back to the drawing board," said Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif., chair of the centrist group New Democrat Coalition.

Tauscher was joined by Reps. Ron Kind, D-Wis., Artur Davis, D-Ala., and Adam Smith, D-Wash., in a letter to President Bush saying they could not support the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

They cited its weak approach to worker rights and the administration's inadequate backing for retraining programs for U.S. workers hurt by the effects of trade.

The four joined the majority of Democrats.

House passage of the deal can't happen without Democratic support, and so far only three have made it known they will vote for it.