

04-10

Statement of Policy

Healthy International Trade

Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) supports trade agreements that give comparable consideration and priority to public health and safety issues as the agreements give to economic and financial interests.

- NACCHO advocates for policies, programs, and communication strategies that ensure that the public's health is not compromised in the pursuit of economic interests.
- NACCHO supports vital health and human products and services (such as personal health and public health services) and supports preservation of critical natural public resources (such as safe food and water, clean air and clean energy) and supports avoiding compromise of these services and resources in all trade negotiations.
- NACCHO supports an assessment of the impact on the public's health of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement, Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), Trade and Investment Framework Agreements (TIFAs), Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) and similar international trade agreements. Based on such assessments, NACCHO supports modifications ensuring that these agreements do not have an adverse impact on the public's health.
- NACCHO supports that all trade negotiations and agreements have public health standards such that each party to the agreement accepts the most restrictive of their standards so as to minimize global risk to the public's health.
- NACCHO supports the inclusion of appropriate public health representation in negotiations to ensure that regulatory protections and enforcement of standards (including international standards and standards of other treaty or agreement signers) regarding health, vital human services, and the environment are not compromised in trade agreements.

Justification

The General Agreement on Trade Services (GATS), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and similar trade agreements have placed economic and financial interests above health and have preempted a wide range of US laws, rules, policies and programs that protect or enhance the public's health and safety; including those related to tobacco control, the environment, food safety, and occupational safety and health; the affordability of vital human services, and the integrity of the ecosystem¹.



The process for negotiations for these agreements (including the current Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and others under negotiation) does not clearly prioritize the public's health and fails to include input from the public health and environmental community.

The World Trade Organization, based on these trade agreements, has overturned government decisions that protect the environment and public health but conflict with a nation's trade interests².

Such actions resulting from these trade agreements can have a direct impact on public health services and the ability to protect and improve the public's health at the local level.

Record of Action

Adopted by NACCHO Board of Directors

November 7, 2004

Updated July 29, 2009

1. American Public Health Association, Threats to Global Health and Equity: The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)(2001), Retrieved September 1, 2009, from <http://www.apha.org/advocacy/policy/policysearch/default.htm?id=260>; Ellen Shaffer and Joe Brenner, Trade and Health: Corporatizing Vital Human Services, in Mary Anne Mercer et al, (eds.) *Sickness and Wealth* (Boston: South End Press, 2004).
2. L. Wallach and M. Sforza, *The WTO: Five Years of Reasons to Resist Corporate Globalization* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999).