

Rangel Blasts NAM On Trade

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By Ian Swanson, April 20, 2007

Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.) Thursday blasted the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), claiming it is distorting Democratic demands on U.S. trade policy and labor law.

Rangel was responding to a letter sent to him earlier Thursday by NAM President John Engler, a former GOP governor of Michigan. In the letter, Engler warned that NAM would oppose any trade deals that included International Labor Organization (ILO) standards because it could lead to changes to U.S. labor laws.

Rangel said Engler's letter grossly distorted facts. "I am astounded that NAM would go to such lengths to jeopardize the hard work of so many in Congress and the administration who are negotiating these issues," he said in a written statement.

NAM incorrectly suggested that Rangel and other Democrats want ILO conventions included in trade deals, and that Democratic demands could allow labor unions in other countries to challenge U.S. labor laws, the statement said.

Democrats are demanding that countries in a U.S. trade deal be obligated to adhere to the five basic ILO conventions, and that only another government could challenge the U.S., and then only when trade is impacted.

"If outside groups are serious in their desire to shape and support future trade policies, they need to understand that it does not help at all to issue press releases distorting the facts and misrepresenting the views of those negotiating the policy," Rangel said.