

July 18, 2005      The House of Representatives is scheduled to vote on the Central American Free Trade Agreement in the next two weeks, and one little-known provision of the agreement desperately needs to be exposed to public view. CAFTA, like the World Trade Organization, may serve as a forum for restricting or even banning dietary supplements in the U.S. The Codex Alimentarius Commission, organized by the United Nations in the 1960s, is charged with "harmonizing" food and supplement rules between all nations of the world. Under Codex rules, even basic vitamins and minerals require a doctor's prescription. The European Union already has adopted Codex-type regulations, regulations that will be in effect across Europe later this year. This raises concerns that the Europeans will challenge our relatively open market for health supplements in a WTO forum. This is hardly far-fetched, as Congress already has cravenly changed our tax laws to comply with a WTO order. Like WTO, CAFTA increases the possibility that Codex regulations will be imposed on the American public. Section 6 of CAFTA discusses Codex as a regulatory standard for nations that join the agreement. If CAFTA has nothing to do with dietary supplements, as CAFTA supporters claim, why in the world does it specifically mention Codex? Unquestionably there has been a slow but sustained effort to regulate dietary supplements on an international level. WTO and CAFTA are part of this effort. Passage of CAFTA does not mean your supplements will be outlawed immediately, but it will mean that another international trade body will have a say over whether American supplement regulations meet international standards. And make no mistake about it, those international standards are moving steadily toward the Codex regime and its draconian restrictions on health freedom. So the question is this: Does CAFTA, with its link to Codex, make it more likely or less likely that someday you will need a doctor's prescription to buy even simple supplements like Vitamin C? The answer is clear. CAFTA means less freedom for you, and more control for bureaucrats who do not answer to American voters. Pharmaceutical companies have spent billions of dollars trying to get Washington to regulate your dietary supplements like European governments do. So far, that effort has failed in America, in part because of a 1994 law called the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act. Big Pharma and the medical establishment hate this Act, because it allows consumers some measure of freedom to buy the supplements they want. Americans like this freedom, however-- especially the health conscious Baby Boomers. This is why the drug companies support WTO and CAFTA. They see international trade agreements as a way to do an end run around American law and restrict supplements through international regulations. The largely government-run health care establishment, including the nominally private pharmaceutical companies, want government to control the dietary supplement industry-- so that only they can manufacture and distribute supplements. If that happens, as it already is happening in Europe, the supplements you now take will be available only by prescription and at a much higher cost-- if they are available at all. This alone is sufficient reason for Congress to oppose the unconstitutional, sovereignty-destroying CAFTA bill.