

THE FTAA IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH

If you love HMOs and managed care, you'll love the FTAA.

What's the FTAA?

The FTAA is a new global trade agreement that, if completed, could give global corporations the power to:

- **Weaken** health care quality standards.
- Increase the number of patients a nurse has to care for.
- **Undercut** health and safety laws in hospitals and health care facilities.
- Further **privatize** health care and make it harder to create an efficient, publicly coordinated health care system in the future.

The FTAA, along with two other trade agreements—GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services), and CAFTA (Central America Free Trade Agreement)—are now being negotiated behind closed doors.

We must stop these trade agreements before it is too late.



Who benefits from the FTAA?

Transnational Corporations (TNCs) are the winners:

- The FTAA will give these large corporations a charter of rights to protect their investments throughout the Americas.
- TNCs will be given a green light to freely move their operations across international borders in order to minimize costs and maximize profits.

How else might the FTAA affect health care?

Right now, US laws and regulations protect us when we need health care. For example:

- *Licensing laws* make sure that doctors, nurses, and technicians are qualified and competent.
- *Staffing ratios* limit how many patients nurses have to care for.
- *Labor laws* limit the hours that health care workers have to work.
- *Health and safety laws* make sure hospitals are safe places.

People won these protections through years of organizing and hard work. But under the FTAA, GATS, and CAFTA:

- Foreign corporations and governments could challenge **U.S. health care regulations** as "more burdensome than necessary."

For example, laws requiring reasonable staffing ratios, use of safe needles, and professional licensing could be challenged using new rules on "domestic regulation." Who decides what's "burdensome?" Three corporate trade experts deliberating in private and backed up with a powerful enforcement system. Workers and patients would have no right to watch the proceedings or present their perspective. In almost every case decided under the WTO (World Trade Organization) and NAFTA trade tribunal system to date, corporate interests have won and the public interest has lost.

- Rules on the **temporary entry of workers** could allow transnational corporations to bring immigrant workers into a country just to work in a particular hospital.

Workers would have to leave the country if they were fired, so they would have no bargaining power to insist on decent treatment and fair wages. These rules would cut down wages, safety, and unions in the whole health care industry. WTO staff have stated that one of the aims of these rules is to lower labor costs.

- The "national treatment" rule in the proposed agreements could **further privatize health care**.



Governments would have to treat private health care corporations from abroad just as favorably as public service providers based in the U.S.

That could give foreign corporations an "equal right" to money that we now use to fund public services in the U.S. That would make it harder to save public hospitals and clinics, or create an efficient, publicly coordinated health care system in the future.

What can we do?

Contact the Stop the FTAA campaign to learn more about the FTAA and to see what you can do to stop it. The campaign is a project of the Thomas Merton Center that is working to educate and mobilize our region around efforts to stop passage of the agreement. We are also available to do presentations on the FTAA for your organization, workplace, or group.