

Global Justice for Animals and the Environment

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NEWS RELEASE **SICK PIGS PROTEST SWINE FLU, NAFTA, AND FACTORY FARMING AT GILLIBRAND OFFICE** **One of Over 30 Actions around the Nation for TradeJustice Action Day**

On Monday, October 12th at 10:30 AM, protesters in pig costumes, wearing swine flu masks and holding giant handkerchiefs and tissue boxes, will hold a picket at Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's office at 780 3rd Ave. between 48th and 49th Streets to expose the link between NAFTA, factory farming, and the swine flu epidemic. Signs will read "NAFTA Makes US Sick" and "Factory Farming + NAFTA = Swine Flu." The demonstration is part of an international day of protest including over 30 actions in the US demanding the repeal and replacement of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), US-Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement, and the US-Peru Free Trade Agreement.

The swine flu epidemic is believed to have started at the Smithfield-owned Carroll Ranches hog farm in Veracruz, Mexico. NAFTA came into effect on January 1, 1994, and began a major shift towards factory farm agriculture in Mexico. That year, US pork giant Smithfield Foods opened the "Carroll Ranches" factory hog farm in Veracruz, Mexico. Carroll Ranches processes 800,000 pigs into bacon and other products per year, but does not have a sewage treatment plant. The elimination of import tariffs on government-subsidized, US-produced feed crops under NAFTA allowed US agribusiness to outsource factory farms to Mexico, as they were now able to access the same low-cost feed available in the US and export duty-free pork back to the US while taking advantage of Mexico's lower wages and more lax environmental and safety regulations to minimize costs.

On the campaign trail in 2008, President Obama pledged to renegotiate NAFTA, but has yet to make good on this promise. Activists urge Senator Gillibrand and New York's House delegation to push Obama to make good on and expand his promise to also recognize the threat posed by the Central America and Peru Free Trade Agreements

According to GJAE's Adam Weissman, "Thanks to NAFTA, Smithfield was able to set up filthy factory hog farms in Mexico and export swine flu back to the US. In the years to come we'll see the rise of epidemics that make swine flu look like the common cold unless Congress and President Obama repeal NAFTA, DR-CAFTA, and the Peru Free Trade Agreement."

A list of October 12 actions can be found at <http://snipurl.com/oct12actions> and press kits are available upon request by email.

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