



EBTC INFORMATION BULLETIN

DATE: February 25, 2008

SUBJECT: Democratic candidates on NAFTA

SOURCE: CNN

Sens. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton exchanged sharp words over trade as they campaigned in Ohio before the state's upcoming primary. The economy and jobs are top issues for Ohio voters, and the rivals for the Democratic presidential nomination have blamed trade agreements for the loss of manufacturing jobs.

Since 2000, the state's seen nearly a 25 percent decline in manufacturing employment, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics.

Over the weekend, Clinton accused Obama of misrepresenting her record on the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Taking a mocking swipe at the Illinois senator's campaign style, Clinton said people want actions and not words.

"I could stand up here and say 'Let's just get everybody together, let's get unified, the sky will open, the light will come down, celestial choirs will be singing and everyone will know we should do the right thing and the world will be perfect,' " she said Sunday while campaigning in Ohio.

Clinton struck a populist tone, saying she has made it clear that she is ambivalent about NAFTA, blasting companies for "turning their backs on Americans" while shipping jobs overseas.

Meanwhile, **Obama** railed on Clinton for supporting NAFTA when her husband was president. "Sen. Clinton has been going to great lengths on the campaign trail to distance herself from NAFTA," Obama said Sunday in Lorain, Ohio. "In her own book, Sen. Clinton called NAFTA one of 'Bill's successes' and 'legislative victories.' "

"One million jobs have been lost because of NAFTA, including nearly 50,000 jobs here in Ohio. And yet, 10 years after NAFTA passed, Sen. Clinton said it was good for America. Well, I don't think NAFTA has been good for America -- and I never have," he said.

The weekend feud kicked off when Clinton blasted recent mailings from the Obama camp, telling a crowd in Cincinnati, Ohio, an Obama mailing spread lies about her positions NAFTA.

The mailer says Clinton was a "champion" for NAFTA while first lady, but now opposes it. NAFTA was negotiated by the first President Bush and signed into law by President Bill Clinton.

Citing a 2006 issue of New York Newsday, the mailer says Clinton thought NAFTA was a "boon" to the economy. The term "boon" was actually the paper's characterization of Clinton's stance, and not a quote from her.

"Bad trade deals like NAFTA hit Ohio harder than other states. Only Barack Obama consistently opposed NAFTA," the mailer says.

A visibly angry Clinton lashed out Saturday at Obama over the campaign literature that she said he knows is "blatantly false."

"Shame on you, Barack Obama," she said, adding that she is fighting to change NAFTA.