



**Free Trade with Central America & the Dominican Republic:
Business Opportunities for North Alabama**

**Thursday · March 31, 2005 · Briefing 4:00 p.m. · Reception 5:00 p.m.
Bevill Conference Center Room 280 · University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH)**

The U.S.-Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) is the largest free trade agreement since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This comprehensive FTA includes El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic, and these countries already represent the second-largest U.S. export market in Latin America (after Mexico). Alabama's exports to the DR-CAFTA countries grew by \$201 million (85%) between 1999 and 2003. Currently, more than 75% of Central American goods enter the U.S. duty free under a preference program, but DR-CAFTA would provide duty-free treatment for U.S. goods sold in Central America as well, eliminating barriers to U.S. manufactured goods and services and agricultural products and opening new opportunities for U.S. exports of goods and services. The agreement has been concluded and signed by President Bush and his counterparts, but awaits approval by the U.S. Congress. With an expected vote on the DR-CAFTA in the first half of this year, the FTA with Central America and the Dominican Republic promises to be one of the most important trade votes of 2005.

His Excellency Jose Guillermo Castillo, Ambassador of Guatemala to the United States, will be our honored guest and keynote speaker for this briefing. Ambassador Castillo, who has been actively involved in the FTA negotiations and its promotion, will discuss the economic benefits this FTA would bring to North Alabama and to Central America. Business opportunities with Central America and the Dominican Republic, local business success stories, and the outlook for approval of the FTA in the U.S. Congress will also be discussed. *Please join us for a Networking Reception in the Bevill Center Lobby immediately following the Briefing.*

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DR-CAFTA Forum RESERVATION FORM

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 Contact NAITA at 256.532.3505 or naita@naita.org for further information.**

There is no charge for this event, but reservations are requested.