

# King Obama, His Royal Court, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)

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Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Law and Justice](#)

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A group of demonstrators protesting the Trans-Pacific Partnership gather at the Federal Building in San Francisco, California June 9, 2015. The proposed regional regulatory and investment treaty would include 12 nations throughout the Asia Pacific region that have participated in negotiations. (Photo: Robert Galbraith/Reuters)

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) - a global corporate noose around U.S. local, state, and national sovereignty - narrowly passed a major procedural hurdle in the Congress by gaining "fast track" status. This term "fast track" is a euphemism for your members of Congress - senators and representatives - handcuffing themselves, so as to prevent any amendments or adequate debate before the final vote on the Trans-Pacific Partnership - another euphemism that is used to avoid the word "treaty," which would require ratification by two-thirds of the Senate. This anti-democratic process is being pushed by "King Obama" and his royal court.

Make no mistake. If this was only a trade treaty - reducing tariffs, quotas, and the like - it would not be so controversial. Yet, the corporate-indentured politicians keep calling this gigantic treaty with thirty chapters, of which only five relate to traditional trade issues, a trade agreement instead of a treaty. The other twenty-four chapters, if passed as they are, will have serious impacts on your livelihoods as workers and consumers, as well as your air, water, food, and medicines

The reason I call President Obama "King Obama" in this case is that he, and his massive corporate lobbies (royal court), have sought to circumvent the checks and balances system that is the very bedrock of our government. They have severely weakened the independence of the primary branch of our government - the Congress—and fought off any court challenges with medieval defenses, such as no American citizen has any standing to sue for harm done by such treaties or the subject is a political, not judicial, matter.

Only corporations, astonishingly enough, are entitled to sue the U.S. government for any alleged harm to their profits from health, safety or other regulations in secret tribunals that operate as offshore kangaroo courts, not in open courts.

President Obama has weakened two branches of our government in favor of the third, which is currently his executive branch that has secret negotiations with 11 other nations, some of which are brutal regimes.

Allowing foreign investors (aka corporations) to bypass our courts and sue the U.S. government (aka the taxpayers) for money damages before secret outside tribunals is

considered unconstitutional by many, including [Alan Morrison](#), a constitutional law specialist and litigator now at George Washington University Law School.

In the mid-nineties, I opposed the creation of NAFTA and the World Trade Organization. President Obama and some members of Congress say that the TPP will be different from NAFTA and the WTO, but I doubt that they have read the entire draft of the TPP. They're relying on summary memos by the U.S. Trade Office and corporate lawyers, for example, drug companies that sugarcoat the complex monopolistic extension of the pharmaceutical patents and how this will result in higher prices for your medicines.

I challenge President Obama to state publically that he has read the entire TPP. Even a benign monarch would do this for his/her trusting subjects.

Inside these hundreds of pages of cross references and repeals of conflicting existing laws is the central subversion, subordinating our protective laws for labor, consumers and the environment (impersonally called "non-tariff trader barriers") to the supremacy of international global commercial traffic.

One very recent example - by no means the worst possible - just occurred. After Congress passed a popular "country-of-origin" labeling requirement on meat packages sold in supermarkets, Brazil and Mexico, both exporters of meat to the U.S.A, challenged this U.S. law in a secret (yes, literally secret in all respects) tribunal in Geneva under the World Trade Organization Treaty. Brazil and Mexico won this legal challenge.

"Many Americans will be shocked that the WTO can order our government to deny U.S. consumers the basic information about where their food comes from and that if the information policy is not gutted, we could face millions in sanctions every year," said Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch. "Today's ruling spotlights how these so called 'trade' deals are packed with non-trade provisions that threaten our most basic rights, such as even knowing the source and safety of what's on our dinner plate." A May 2013 survey by the Consumer Federation of America found that 90% of adult Americans favored this "country-of-origin" requirement.

Fearing billions of dollars in penalties, the U.S. Congress is racing to repeal its own law. See how the noose works: foreign countries trying to pull down our higher standards can take conflicts to secret tribunals with three trade judges, who also have corporate clients and can say to the U.S., "Get rid of your protections or pay billions of dollars in tribute."

The same noose can choke efforts by the U.S. to upgrade our health, safety, and economic rights. Had air bags been proposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation under today's global trade *uber alles* regimes, the proposal would have had to go to a harmonization committee of the WTO's signatory countries that would sandpaper or reject this life-saving technology. Or if the U.S. went it alone, it would expose itself to repeal or pay by car-exporting nations.

For ten reasons why the TPP is a bad idea for our country and the world see my recent *Common Dreams* [column](#).

If this all sounds so outrageous as to strain credulity, go beneath the tip of this iceberg and visit: [Global Trade Warch](#) and [Flush the TPP](#). Then, get ready for the battle over the TPP itself in the late autumn. The following are three examples of how to build resistance to an

international problem in your local communities.

First, send the legislators who supported the fast track handcuffs a CITIZENS' SUMMONS to appear at a town meeting where you, not they, present the agenda. If the lawmakers think 500 or more determined people will show up, it is very likely they will relent and meet with you. The unions and other groups working to stop the TPP around the country can get their people to attend these town meetings. August is the congressional recess month. The senators and representative will have no excuse to avoid a town meeting with their constituents. For a list of those legislators who need to be focused on, visit "[Stop Fast Track](#)".

Second, hustle together some modest money from groups and individuals, rent an empty storefront, plaster the windows with large signs, and start a rumble of civic resistance in all directions. Politicians sometimes shrug off the warnings of losing contributions from unions. What politicians do fear is their inability to control groups of resurgent voters indeterminately expanding from inside their district or state.

Since opposition to TPP reflects a Left-Right alliance in Congress and back home, store fronts spell real worry for politicians. They should worry because they chose not to do their homework for their home country.

Third, hold rallies designed to attract, collectively, hundreds or thousands of people around the country. These rallies could have an array of high-profile speakers and entertainers, as well as workers who have been harmed by past so-called trade agreements. Rallies can bring in new people and start the process of galvanizing them about the many problems with the TPP.

Remember, 75 percent of Americans think that the TPP should be rejected or delayed according to a bipartisan poll from the *Wall Street Journal*. People know what these "pull-down," misnamed trade agreements have done in their own communities. Start organizing today to win tomorrow!

**Ralph Nader** is a consumer advocate, lawyer, and author. His latest book is [The Seventeen Solutions: Bold Ideas for Our American Future](#). Other recent books include, [The Seventeen Traditions: Lessons from an American Childhood](#), [Getting Steamed to Overcome Corporatism: Build It Together to Win](#), and "[Only The Super-Rich Can Save Us](#)"(a novel).

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