

Repealing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP): Fast Track Not A Done Deal, The People Will Stop It

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There is bi-partisan opposition in Congress to Fast Track and a large movement of movements mobilized to stop it.

The corporate media is reporting that since the Republican leadership and President Obama support Fast Track trade authority, it is a done deal. And that message, also heard by countries negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), is driving the race to finalize that agreement.

The truth is: Fast Track is not a done deal. There is bi-partisan opposition in Congress and a large movement of movements organized to stop it.

Across the political spectrum there is mass opposition to fast tracking the secretly negotiated TPP, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP, aka TAFTA) and the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA). People remember the impact of NAFTA on job loss, destruction of Mexican agriculture, expansion of inequality, environmental degradation and increased immigration. The most recent [South Korean trade pact](#), which Obama touts as a success, is leading to similar results of lost jobs and an expanding US trade deficits.

Members of both parties know that Obama will be out of office when the negative impacts of these trade agreements are felt. Congress will be alone facing an angry electorate while Obama is raising money for his post-presidential career from the transnational corporations who get rich off these agreements at the expense of everyone else.

Conservative Opposition Grows In All Segments of Republican Party

On the conservative side of the political spectrum there is more organizing than ever. Breitbart reports a [Fast Track bill faces conservative headwinds](#). The opposition as a “broad spectrum of the Republican Party” and represents “all three legs of the traditional Republican Party stool- national security, economics and faith-based.”

Breitbart quotes Rick Manning of Americans for Limited Government expressing concern about the secrecy surrounding the trade agreements, a concern shared by colleagues across the spectrum, “we don’t know what’s in it. We do know that this is a huge grant of authority to President Obama.”

[Dana Milbank](#) writing for the Washington Post (a very pro-free trade publication) notes how for six years Republicans have railed about President Obama usurping power, and the irony of its leadership now wanting to give Obama massively expanded power through fast track. He highlights the Tea Party opposition to fast track and notes “roughly 30 House

Republicans are already on record opposing the trade legislation.” The conservative activist base predicts that number is growing.

Conservatives have taken to calling the trade deals [ObamaTrade](#) and do not want to see the Congress give away its authority under the Constitution’s Commerce Clause “to regulate commerce with foreign nations.” Manning describes Fast Track as Congress “effectively tying its own hands.”

In a [press statement](#) quoting multiple conservative leaders, TheTeaParty.net leader Niger Innis builds on Manning’s point, describing Fast Track as ceding additional legislative powers to Obama that would be “a monumental failure of Congressional Republicans.”

These conservatives highlight Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell admitting Fast Track is “an enormous grant of power, obviously, from a Republican Congress to a Democratic president.” Manning described McConnell’s path as the opposite of what Congress should be doing, saying the legislation is “an ill-founded grant of trust to a President who has repeatedly shown that he has outright disdain for the legislative branch, rather than providing a speedy up or down vote, the Senate should examine every aspect of any treaty that is presented to ensure that American interests are advanced.”

Frank Gaffney, president and founder of the Center for Security Policy, [told WND](#) (World News Daily) that “We know the people bringing us this deal have a record of serial malfeasance with respect to negotiations. It would not only be the height of irresponsibility to essentially give the president a blank check, it would be something that makes the Congress complicit in the next bad deal if they give the president fast track authority.”

WND reported that at an event on Capitol Hill, Glyn Wright, executive director of the Eagle Forum, presented remarks from conservative icon Phyllis Schlafly. She blasted the Congressional move toward Fast Track as sending the wrong message saying “Fast track just legitimizes what the president has already done once again behind Congress’ back.”

Religious conservative, [Sandy Rios, the director of government affairs for the American Family Association, emphasized](#) opposition to the trade agreements because they undermine the traditional role of the United States in using its economic might to expand freedom around the world saying, “Wisdom dictates that America must use all means at its disposal to resist religious persecution anywhere it is found through the power of our God-given treasure and resources. It is for this reason that American Family Association opposes passage of fast track legislation that negates their ability to change the Trans-Pacific Partnership to end religious oppression in Vietnam, Brunei and Malaysia.”

WND reports that the coalition delivered a letter to Congress urging opposition to Fast Track. Further, the coalition promised “a robust effort to educate members of Congress and their constituents about the dangers of giving Obama yet more power.” In addition to those at the press conference, they report that others signing the group letter were Jenny Beth Martin, founder of Tea Party Patriots and Judson Philips of Tea Party Nation.

Conservatives, like progressives, want the trade agreements to be considered under regular order, which would allow for unlimited debate and amendments.

Largest Progressive Coalition Ever On Global Trade Opposes Fast Track

On January 8, a large coalition of progressive and liberal organizations joined with more than

a dozen members of Congress to express opposition to Fast Track and the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Larry Cohen, president of the Communication Workers of America, described the coalition as “the largest coalition to ever oppose global trade agreements, representing tens of millions of Americans.

[Rep. Rosa DeLauro](#), D-Conn., who is leading the opposition on the Democratic side in Congress, echoed Cohen’s view saying “This is one of the broadest advocacy coalitions that we’ve had. There is no reason why we should exacerbate the loss of jobs or lower wages in the United States.”

Opponents on the left [argue](#) “the president is asking for carte blanche to hammer out trade deals that would cost American jobs, weaken food safety and financial regulations, and undermine environmental and labor standards.”

When President Obama toured the country to discuss the economy he avoided mention of the trade agreements as he knows the Democratic base opposes them. But, even without mentioning them, people in Detroit took the opportunity of a presidential visit to express their anger.

[Politico reports](#) that even before he landed, Obama was being attacked by labor, Hill Democrats and others in his base for his call for new trade deals. [Reuters reports](#) that local officials say “the Korean free trade agreement has helped that country’s auto industry significantly more than the U.S. sector.” They told the president that “trade agreements would hurt manufacturing jobs like those in the resurgent auto industry.”

The White House has touted the South Korean trade pact as the type of agreement Obama wants to see. The facts: in its first two years, the pact resulted in \$7.6 billion increase in the trade deficit with South Korea and the loss of 50,000 jobs. Perhaps the president is making the mistake of believing the [false and misleading statements of the US Trade Representative](#). [Lori Wallach](#), director of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch, said “The fact that the Korea deal has resulted in a worse trade deficit and more lost jobs has had a very chilling effect on public and congressional support for the TPP and Fast Track....”

The AFL-CIO’s Richard Trumka said unions oppose the trade deals and will put resources into a campaign to stop Fast Track. Celeste Drake, the AFL-CIO’s policy specialist for trade and international economics, told Politico there’s no way to make an argument both for a major international trade deal and for American workers, as Obama is attempting to do, adding:

“If you’re serious about reviving U.S. manufacturing and raising wages for America’s workers, the last thing you want is yet another race-to-the-bottom trade agreement that doesn’t empower workers, it empowers companies to offshore jobs. And you fight fast track — the process that guarantees that bad trade deals become law — tooth and nail.”

When trade negotiators gathered in Washington, DC in early December they were protested by a broad coalition of groups. The day of protests began with a [Popular Resistance blockade](#) of the US Trade Reps building calling for release of the text and opposing Fast Track. [Eyes on Trade reports](#): “hundreds of activists from labor, environmental, consumer, human rights, public health, Internet freedom, faith and family farm activists joined concerned citizens to loudly make their voices heard outside of the secretive negotiations.”

The cry heard from the protest was “No Fast Track now, No Fast Track ever! The TPP is a lost endeavor!”

Eyes on Trade further reports:

“Fast Track faces widespread opposition in the U.S. Congress and among the U.S. public. Though a [Fast Track bill](#) was tabled about one year ago, it has gone nowhere due to massive opposition from most [Democrats](#) and a [sizeable bloc of Republicans](#). This past September, nearly 600 organizations [sent a letter](#) opposing Fast Track to Chair Ron Wyden. A poll earlier this year found that [62 percent of U.S. voters oppose](#) Fast Tracking the TPP.”

Indeed, a year ago when the Congress considered Fast Track there was a massive outpouring of opposition. [Congress received](#) more than 40,000 phone calls and 600,000 emails opposing Fast Track in ten days. More than 100 organizations joined the [Stop Fast Track](#) coalition, 5.4 million users were reached in a social media “Thunderclap” and [50 rallies and protests](#) were held in the US, Canada and Mexico.

In November 2014, the opposition to TPP grew significantly when the world’s largest trade union, the International Trade Union Confederation representing 176 million workers [added their voice](#) to the growing list of organizations and individuals speaking out against the trade pact. They urged that the negotiations be stopped and a transparent process be developed before they begin again.

In November, during [the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation \(APEC\) summit](#) there were protests held around the world against TPP. In the United States, a broad coalition of labor unions, environmental, consumer, faith, online, and other groups assembled on Capitol Hill [to deliver 713,674 petition signatures](#) opposing Fast Track. Eyes on Trade reporting on these worldwide protests says “The message of citizens across the globe is clear: we are not willing to accept a ‘trade’ deal negotiated in secret in the interest of corporations and at the expense of our rights to safety, democracy, and health.”

Opposition Will Grow, Fast Track Will Be Defeated

President Obama will be urging action on Fast Track in his upcoming State of the Union address, bringing national attention to trade agreements shrouded in secrecy. As more people learn about these agreements opposition will grow across the political spectrum. There will be an immediate reaction of tens of thousands contacting Congress to oppose Fast Track and secretive trade deals.

[Dave Johnson](#) has a preview of the State of the Union and a response to what Obama is expected to say. He notes that Obama plans to have an owner of a small business that has increased exports to South Korea. This will be a false story as the opposite is more common. On the specific point of small business, Johnson writes:

“The KORUS FTA has hit American small businesses harder than large ones. According to [U.S. Census Bureau data](#), small firms with fewer than 100 employees saw exports to Korea drop 14 percent while firms with more than 500 employees saw exports decline by 3 percent.”

The State of the Union will be followed by Congress holding hearings on Fast Track at the end of January. Congress is likely to introduce legislation on Fast Track shortly after that.

This will galvanize opposition and members of Congress will realize they are risking their careers if they support giving this authority to President Obama. They will understand that these 'NAFTA on steroid' agreements risk their political futures.

The arguments are on our side. Public Citizen published [a report reviewing the 20 year history](#) of these corporate trade agreements. The data paint an ugly picture:

- Trade deficits have exploded, growing more than 440 percent with countries with Fast Tracked trade pacts. Since Fast Track was used for NAFTA and the WTO, the U.S. goods trade deficit has more than quadrupled, from \$216 billion to \$870 billion.
- Good American jobs were destroyed; nearly 5 million U.S. manufacturing jobs - one in four - were lost since the Fast Tracking NAFTA.
- U.S. wages have stagnated and inequality has soared with three of every five manufacturing workers who lost a job finding reemployment with pay cuts, one in three losing greater than 20 percent, according to the Labor Department. U.S. wages have barely increased in real terms since 1974 - the year that Fast Track was first enacted - despite American worker productivity doubling.
- U.S. food exports have stagnated while food imports have doubled under NAFTA and the WTO. The average annual U.S. agricultural deficit with Canada and Mexico under NAFTA's first two decades reached \$975 million, almost three times the pre-NAFTA level. Approximately 170,000 small U.S. family farms have gone under since NAFTA and WTO took effect.

This is a hard record to defend. Congress will be made aware of the failure of corporate trade agreements and warned that they will be the ones paying the political price. Congress needs to live up to its constitutional duty and oppose Fast Track and examine these agreements closely.

These trade agreements are [game changers for climate justice](#). People can work to stop [extreme energy extraction](#) or create a new energy economy in the face of climate change, but if these treaties become law, their [efforts will have been in vain](#) and their [successes reversed](#).

The [same is true](#) for Internet activists who are working to ensure a free and open Internet. All of the work on [raising wages will be undone](#) by trade agreements that [allow corporations to sue](#) for expected lost profit from laws passed in the public interest.

On issue after issue, if we fail to stop these trade agreements, it will be a major setback. The only way these agreements can become law is through secret negotiations in league with transnational corporations followed by Congress giving up its constitutional responsibility and not having a democratic and transparent review process. Stopping Fast Track is the essential task ahead.

A major opportunity to show our opposition to Fast Track and stop these trade agreements will be in New York City. A meeting of trade negotiators for the TPP has been scheduled for Jan. 26-Feb. 1. It will take place at the Sheraton Times Square Hotel in midtown Manhattan. They are pushing hard to complete the negotiations and a protest at this event will let trade negotiators know that the people say "No Fast Track, no way, not ever, not today."

[Click here for more information about what you can do to stop Fast Track.](#)

Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers are co-directors of [Popular Resistance](#).

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