

TPP: U.S. Congress Rejects Fast Track “Trade Promotion Authority” - For Now

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Baseball great Yogi Berra was right. “It ain’t over till it’s over.” More on this below.

On Friday, House members rejected fast track (Trade Promotion Authority - TPA) by a convoluted process explained below.

If enacted, it would let Obama ram through Congress with minimal hearings and no debate anti-consumer, ecosystem-destroying trade legislation global justice advocates call NAFTA on steroids.

Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade legislation empowers corporations over national sovereignty, domestic laws and popular interests. It’s nightmarish by any standard.

Not according to Obama. On April 25, he lied claiming TPP is “the highest standard trade agreement in history.”

“It’s got strong provisions for workers and the environment...(I)t fixes a lot of what was wrong with NAFTA...”

It’s “a race to the top...If I didn’t think this was the right thing to do for working families, I wouldn’t be fighting for it.”

False on all counts!! TPP makes NAFTA look tame by comparison. It’s an anti-consumer, environmentally destructive jobs killer - a boon for corporate predators at the expense of ordinary people in all 12 TPP countries.

The battle to defeat fast track and TPP isn’t over. Here’s what happened Friday.

Late May enacted Senate legislation included fast track (TPA) and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) authorizing funding programs for workers displaced by jobs-killing imports.

On Friday, the Republican-controlled House voted on TPA and TAA separately. Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D. CA) called for slowing down fast track to ensure more transparent and accountable to the public negotiations.

Democrat opposition followed. TAA was overwhelmingly defeated 302 - 126. Many Republicans rejected it.

TAA and TPP were packaged together. Defeating one negated the other. Speaker John Boehner (R. OH) proceeded anyway.

He called for a vote on a technically dead bill – meaning the result was invalid. Fast track passed 219 – 211. He forced another TAA vote next week.

If it passes, a combined TAA/TPP package would go to Obama for enactment. If it fails, fast track would go back to the Senate for possible passage without TAA.

House members defeated TAA overwhelmingly (by a 176 vote margin). It's highly unlikely even the most concerted push can turn around enough no votes to make a difference.

At the same time, Obama and corporate lobbyists are capable of the most deceitful, underhanded practices. So it bears repeating. "It ain't over till it's over."

On Friday, Global Trade Watch Director Lori Wallach said "weeks of procedural gimmicks and deals swapped for yes votes...could not assuage Americans' concerns that more of the same trade policy would kill more jobs and push down our wages."

The more people understand what lawmakers negotiate behind their backs, the angrier they get, Wallach explained.

"Today the allegedly unstoppable momentum of the White House, GOP leadership and corporate coalition pushing Fast Track to grease the path for adoption of the almost-completed, controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) deal just hit the immovable object called transpartisan grassroots democracy," said Wallach.

"Today's outcome is a testament to the strength and diversity of the remarkable coalition of thousands of organizations that overcame a money-soaked lobbying campaign by multinational corporations and intense arm-twisting by the GOP House leadership and the Obama administration."

The battle for justice never ends. Organized people beating organized money sometimes means it's possible more often with enough determination to challenge powerful interests at their own dirty game.

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