

Congress Introduces Fast Track Legislation to Help Enact Anti-Consumer Trade Bills

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Congressional passage of so-called “trade promotion authority” (TPA) will let Obama expedite the legislative process for pending Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) bills.

The Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 (TPA 2015) lets Obama and his trade representative, complicit with corporate predators, rush through Congress, with minimal hearings and no amendments, legislation global justice advocates call NAFTA on steroids.

TPP and TTIP are trade bills from hell. They’re secretive, multi-national trade deals giving monied interests more power than ever at the expense of personal freedom for consumers and environmental sanity.

They’ll permit unrestricted trade in goods, services, rules of origin, trade remedies, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers, government procurement and competition policies, and intellectual property (IP).

IP includes copyrights, trademarks, patents, and related considerations.

One-sided pro-business structuring harms popular rights. At stake is a free and open Internet, its global infrastructure, and worldwide innovation under level playing field rules.

Power brokers want secretive provisions established with no public knowledge of their destructive harm.

TPP and TTIP rewrite global IP enforcement rules. They include numerous other anti-populist provisions. They override national sovereignty. They prioritize investor rights over public ones.

Obama lied saying:

“The bill put forward today would help us write (trade) rules in a way that avoids the mistakes from our past, seizes opportunities for our future, and stays true to our values.”

“It would level the playing field, give our workers a fair shot, and for the first time, include strong fully enforceable protections for workers’ rights, the environment, and a free and open internet.”

Fact: Trade rules Obama advocates are polar opposite what he claims. They'll benefit monied interests at the expense of all others.

The [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#) (EFF) calls fast track legislation a way to "legitimize White House secrecy and clear the way for (anti-consumer) trade deals."

They impose restrictive digital regulations. They create a new Chief Transparency Officer – a likely corporate official with authority to:

"consult with Congress on transparency policy, coordinate transparency in trade negotiations, engage and assist the public, and advise the United States Trade Representative on transparency policy."

Given existing strict confidentiality rules (and greater than ever corporate empowerment on trade), nothing meaningful will be done to improve transparency.

As things now stand, fast track text language will be made public 60 days before signed if passed.

According to EFF, it doesn't matter. "(T)he text is already locked down from any further amendments."

Fast track "t(ies) the hands of Congress so that it is unable to give meaningful input into the agreement during its drafting, or to thoroughly review the agreement once it is completed."

It can only vote up or down with no changes. Most troubling is what's excluded from negotiating objectives.

Nothing requires "balance in copyright, such as the fair use right," says EFF.

"(I)f a country's adoption of a fair use style right causes loss to a foreign investor, it could even be challenged as a breach of the agreement..."

"(W)e do not see anything in this bill that would truly remedy the secretive, undemocratic process of trade agreements," EFF stresses.

Fast track will likely be voted on next week. Passage "would legitimize the White House's corporate-captured, backroom (secretive, anti-consumer) trade negotiations."

Lori Wallach heads Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch (GTW). Fast track authority "delegate(s) away Congress' constitutional authority and (grants) blank-check (presidential) power," she explains.

Fast track "would make it easier for corporations to offshore American jobs, would undermine our wages by forcing Americans to compete with Vietnamese workers making less than 60 cents an hour and would expose our consumer and environmental safeguards to attack by foreign corporations in extra-judicial tribunals" – run by corporate predators.

Congress is being asked to yield its constitutional trade authority to diktat presidential power.

Congress permitted fast track for only 5 of the past 21 years – 2002-2007.

It remains to be seen if it'll authorize what demands rejection – what hugely benefits America's 1% at the expense of all others.

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