

The “Trans-Pacific Partnership”: Obama’s Secret Trade Deal

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Out of public view the Obama administration is negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, a US-led free trade deal with several Pacific Rim countries. Six hundred US corporate advisers have had input, but so far the text hasn’t been shared with the public or media.

The level of secrecy is unprecedented. During discussions paramilitary teams guard the premises, helicopters loom overhead, and there’s a near-total media blackout on the subject. US Senator Ron Wyden, who chairs the congressional committee with jurisdiction over TPP agreement, was denied access to the negotiation texts.



In a floor statement to Congress Wyden said, “The majority of Congress is being kept in the dark as to the substance of the TPP negotiations, while representatives of US corporations — like Halliburton, Chevron, Comcast and the Motion Picture Association of America — are being consulted and made privy to details of the agreement.”

The deal would give multinational corporations unprecedented rights to demand taxpayer compensation for policies they think will undermine their expected future profits — straight from the treasuries of participating nations. It would push Big Pharma’s agenda in the developing world — longer monopoly controls on drugs, drastically limiting access to affordable generic meds that people need. The TPP would undermine food safety by limiting labeling and forcing countries like the US to import food that fails to meet its national safety standards, and ban Buy America or Buy Local preferences.

The proposed legislation on intellectual property will have enormous impacts, including Internet termination for households, businesses, and organizations as an accepted penalty for copyright infringement. Nations who sign on to the deal would essentially submit themselves to oppressive IP restrictions designed by Hollywood, severely limiting their ability to digitally exchange information on sites like YouTube, where streaming videos are considered copyrightable.

“Broader copyright and intellectual property rights demands by the US would lock up the Internet, stifle research and increase education costs, by extending existing generous copyright from 70 years to 120 years, and even making it a criminal offense to temporarily store files on a computer without authorization. The US, a net exporter of digital information, would be the only party to benefit from this,” said Patricia Ranald, convener of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network.

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