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Contact: Symone Sanders, (202) 454-5108
Jason Stanford, 202-637-5037
Brian Stewart, press@moveon.org
Anna Oman, aoman@aft.org
Arthur Stamoulis, (202) 494-8826
Andrew Jerome, ajerome@nfudc.org

2,009 Organizations Call on Congress to Oppose Fast Track Authority for the TPP

Unprecedented Unity Against Bill to Railroad into Place a TPP Replicating Failed Terms of Past Trade Pacts that Offshored Jobs, Lowered Wages and Exposed Consumer and Environmental Safeguards to Attack

WASHINGTON, D.C. — An unprecedentedly united movement of labor, environmental, family farm, consumer, faith, Internet freedom and other organizations escalated their campaign to defeat Fast Track trade authority for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) today with a joint 2,009-group letter urging Congress to oppose it.

As the TPP text leaks revealed that the pact replicates and expands on the most damaging provisions of past U.S. trade pacts, thousands of organizations nationwide have educated their members about the TPP's threats to American jobs and wages, food safety, affordable medicines, the environment, financial stability and more. The pact also replicates the labor and environmental framework first established in George W. Bush's final trade agreements, which recent U.S. government reports reveal has proved ineffective. These facts have generated wide opposition to the agreement and undermined the White House effort to characterize it as "progressive."

"Fast Track is rigged to give special rights to corporations at the expense of workers and consumers," said Lee Saunders, president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. "We've seen this before and it has led to massive job loss. We cannot get better trade agreements until we get our priorities straight."

"While we are not currently permitted to see the terms of the new trade deal, what we do know is the Fast Track process enables trade deals that hurt everyday Americans and stack the deck in favor of corporations," said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers. "It limits public and congressional oversight and does not allow effective enforcement. We need trade policy that strengthens our country — ensuring the rights of workers, and

protecting consumers and the environment. We need a democratic and transparent trade process that offers a fair shake for American workers. Fast Track fails these standards and should be rejected.”

The Fast Track legislation would allow the president to sign and enter into the TPP before Congress approves its contents with a guarantee that the done deal would then be voted on within 90 days after it is submitted with ordinary congressional review, amendment and debate procedures forbidden. If enacted, the legislation would also allow whomever may be president in the next six years to unilaterally select trade partners, launch new negotiation, set the terms and sign and enter into any and all agreements before Congress approves pacts’ contents or trade partners and then railroad such future deals through Congress.

“President Obama may believe the TPP is good for America, even if from what we have seen of the text we strongly disagree, but who knows who will be president next, and if Congress approves this Fast Track bill that unknown president would get unacceptable powers to unilaterally dictate trade policies that are do or die for American jobs and wages and the consumer and environmental safeguards on which all of our families rely,” said Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch.

The unprecedented opposition to Fast Track has been fueled, in part, by the administration’s admission that the TPP is modeled after the Obama administration’s biggest trade agreement to date: the 2012 U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement. That pact was sold with the same claims being made for the TPP — that it would lead to more exports and more jobs. But three years into the deal, U.S. exports to Korea have declined 5 percent and the goods trade deficit with Korea has ballooned 84 percent, which equates to the loss of an estimated 85,000 American jobs using the same trade-jobs ratio that the administration used to claim the pact would create 70,000 jobs.

“Fast Track for the TPP fails to address our nation’s massive and growing trade deficit or currency manipulation in member countries of TPP negotiations,” said Roger Johnson, president of the National Farmers Union. “Congress should maintain its constitutional authority to address these concerns by rejecting TPA legislation that removes it.”

Leaked texts first published by the Citizens Trade Campaign, and more recently by WikiLeaks, further reveal U.S. negotiators pushing extreme investor-state dispute settlement and intellectual property provisions for the TPP that would jeopardize environmental protections, consumer safety standards, Internet freedom and access to medicine in the United States and throughout the Pacific Rim.

“We have serious environmental concerns about the pending trade agreements which is why we oppose giving a blank check to turn those into law,” said Peter Lehner, executive director of the Natural Resources Defense Council. “These agreements could undercut many of our bedrock environmental and public health protections.”

“Congress should reject this retrograde fast track legislation that is designed to usher in the secret Trans-Pacific Partnership — a trade deal that is a raw deal for consumers,” said Wenonah Hauter, executive director of Food & Water Watch. “The fine print in Fast Track contains an all-out attack on America’s consumer protection and food safety laws. Fast Track allows U.S. trade

negotiators to trade away vital consumer safeguards to win giveaways for big business in the TPP or other trade deals. The safety of American consumers is up for sale under Fast Track."

"MoveOn.org's 8 million members are adamantly opposed to Fast Track legislation that would grease the way to passing the TPP, and hand over even more power to massive, unaccountable corporations," said Ben Wikler Washington director for MoveOn.org. "This is a basic, threshold question for Democrats: Will they stand with Elizabeth Warren and the public? Or will they vote against the people that, at least in the past, elected them to office?"

Other organizations to sign the letter include 350.org, Action Aid USA, Alliance for Retired Americans, American Sustainable Business Council, Consumers Union, Defenders of Wildlife, Electronic Frontier Foundation, League of Conservation Voters, Presbyterian Church USA, NAACP, National Nurses United, Presente.org, SEIU and Union of Concerned Scientists.

The letter notes that the Hatch-Ryan bill's much-touted negotiating objectives "are entirely unenforceable," that its transparency provisions "fail to match even the level of transparency found in past practice," that "provisions that would ostensibly enable Congress to strip Fast Track authority from trade agreements ... are, in fact, more difficult for Congress to trigger than simply voting down a Fast Tracked agreement in the first place," and concludes that, "Put simply, this is the same failed Fast Track process that has delivered harmful trade agreements again and again."

A PDF copy of today's letter opposing Fast Track can be found online at:
www.citizenstrade.org/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/FastTrackOppositionLtr_042715.pdf

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