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NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. Abandons Final Pretense of Transparency or Inclusion of Consumer, Health, Environmental, Labor Perspective in Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Talks

WASHINGTON D.C. – U.S. trade officials [have quietly cut stakeholder presentations](#) from the next set of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement negotiations, eliminating the last pretense that the process of the talks is transparent and inclusive and sending a message that only the views of the 600 official corporate trade advisors provided special access to the talks will be reflected in the final deal, Public Citizen said today. At previous TPP negotiating rounds, a day was set aside for civil society groups and others with concerns about the TPP to make presentations to negotiators.

“The message is clear: From now on, not only will the talks remain behind closed doors, but all pretense of consideration of consumer safety, health, environmental or labor concerns has been thrown out in favor of ensuring that the damning record of past U.S. trade pacts use of the same terms being pushed by the U.S. for TPP are not brought into the discussion,” said Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch.

“The stakeholder presentations were the last vestige of transparency in these TPP talks,” Wallach said. “Many negotiators from other countries have told me that the stakeholder process was very valuable because it provided detailed information on the problems caused by past U.S. trade agreements (and on how they have actually worked) that was not generally available and certainly not being shared by U.S. negotiators, who generally have promoted positions promoted by industry interests.”

Indeed, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce recently noted on its website that it had [“led the business community’s advocacy for U.S.”](#) negotiators to include strong disciplines in the TPP trade agreement on intellectual property and path-breaking new rules on regulatory coherence,

due process in antitrust enforcement and state-owned enterprises. In these and other areas, U.S. negotiators have proposed negotiating text that hews close to the chamber's recommendations."

Public Citizen earlier this month joined with other public interest groups from the nine TPP countries to demand that the draft TPP [text be released](#). Negotiating texts for past deals have been released, such as for the Free Trade Area of the Americas in 2001. Currently, more than 600 official corporate trade advisors have access – to which the press and public are denied. Indeed, TPP countries signed an agreement in 2010 to not release negotiating texts until four years after a deal is completed or negotiations abandoned.

To date, U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Ron Kirk has refused to release any draft TPP text, despite repeated calls from civil society groups for more than a year. U.S. [Sen. Ron Wyden](#) (D-Ore.), chair of the Senate Finance Committee's Subcommittee on Trade, has led congressional efforts to make the process more transparent. Wyden told Oregon Live, "[When international accords, like ACTA, are conceived and constructed under a cloak of secrecy, it is hard to argue that they represent the broad interests of the general public.](#)"

"USTR's response to the request by civil society groups and Sen. Wyden to see draft texts of a massive agreement that will rewrite wide swaths of U.S. non-trade law has been to slam the door shut, instead of opening up the process and making it more transparent," said Wallach.

The fallout from the U.S. decision already has begun. In response, New Zealand civil society groups have called on their government to "[pull the plug](#)" and walk away from the TPP talks. The TPP negotiations cover issues ranging from banning Buy America policies, to curbing Internet freedom, to providing offshoring incentives and special rights for corporations to attack U.S. laws in foreign tribunals.

"You can only assume that the TPP would not survive the light of day, and that is why the U.S. public is being denied access to details and now civil society groups are being sidelined," Wallach said. "The Obama administration declares itself the most transparent administration ever, and President Barack Obama campaigned on transparency in government. It's time he put those words into action."

The next round of TPP talks will take place May 8-18 at the InterContinental Dallas hotel in Addison, Texas.

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Public Citizen is a national, nonprofit consumer advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. For more information, please visit www.citizen.org.