



1600 20th Street, NW • Washington, D.C. 20009 • 202/588-1000 • www.citizen.org

For Immediate Release:
Oct. 18, 2011

Contact: Bryan Buchanan (202) 454-5108

Recently Revealed ‘Secrecy Pact’ for Trans-Pacific Trade Talks Belies Obama Administration Promises of Transparency in Trade

U.S. Groups Escalate Demands for Access to Trans-Pacific Trade Texts as Global Push for Transparency Builds on Eve of Talks

WASHINGTON, D.C. – After a leaked document revealed that the Obama administration signed a special pact to keep all documents relating to Trans-Pacific Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations secret, a broad array of U.S. groups – including Public Citizen – joined their global counterparts today in demanding an end to the secrecy surrounding the controversial negotiations.

Twenty-two U.S. labor, consumer, faith, environmental and human rights organizations – including the AFL-CIO, Sierra Club, Presbyterian Church (USA) and Public Citizen – sent a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk calling on the U.S. government to implement the administration’s transparency pledges, to take the lead in ending the recently revealed secrecy pact and to release Trans-Pacific FTA negotiating texts. Groups in other participating countries sent similar letters to their governments.

“The fact that negotiators have gone out of their way to execute a special secrecy agreement has made a lot of people wonder just what exactly they are so afraid the press, the public and Congress would see if there was openness,” said Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch. “While executives from hundreds of corporations have been named ‘official trade advisors’ by the Obama administration and given access to the texts, the people whose lives would be most affected may never get to see what our negotiators are bargaining for – and bargaining away – until it’s all over.”

Trans-Pacific FTA talks have taken place behind closed doors, and none of the draft texts has been released despite President Barack Obama’s promises that the Trans-Pacific FTA will usher in a new era of transparency in trade agreement negotiations and result in a “high-standard, 21st century agreement.” Two-thirds of all House Democrats just voted against Obama on FTAs he submitted that had been negotiated in secret by the previous administration. A greater percentage of House Democrats opposed Obama on the passage of these trade pacts than on any other legislation since he took office.

“Given that texts are released by the World Trade Organization and other negotiating venues in which these countries participate – and after years of Obama administration pledges that its trade policymaking would be open and inclusive – it is really outrageous that they signed a special pact to keep the content of these talks that will affect so many peoples’ lives totally secret,” said Wallach.

Today's letter comes after an effort earlier this year to obtain access to negotiating texts. Obama administration officials never responded to the past demands, which also were made by major Democratic base organizations. In February, scores of civil society groups in five of the nine countries involved in the negotiations launched a coordinated "release the text" campaign with letters to their trade ministries. Parliamentarians in some countries have become involved in combating the secrecy surrounding the talks. It was not until the September negotiating round in Chicago that negotiators admitted that in May 2010 they had signed a secrecy agreement that would keep all negotiating documents secret for four years after the talks conclude.

"With numerous negotiating texts now established in addition to the investment and financial services chapters, the relevance and urgency of our request has only increased," the letter said.

Read the full letter, as well as other letters from the international campaign, at <http://bit.ly/nmiw4v>.

###

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