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Job-Killing Trade Deals Pass Congress Amidst Record Democratic Opposition

Obama and Tea Party Flip Flop on Fair Trade Campaign Commitments

Statement of Lori Wallach, Director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch

With nine percent unemployment and Americans desperate for job creation, it is unconscionable that President Obama and House Republicans would push through a trio of NAFTA-style job-killing trade agreements that even the government's own studies show will increase the U.S. trade deficit.

This represents a complete flip-flop for President Obama, who won crucial swing states by pledging to overhaul our flawed trade policies. So it is no surprise that a sizeable majority of Democrats in Congress voted against these agreements, against Obama and for American jobs.

Today a larger share of House Democrats voted against a Democratic president on trade than ever before. It took Bill Clinton nearly eight years of NAFTA job losses, sell outs and scandals to have nearly two-thirds of the House Democrats vote against him on trade.

Given the strong Democratic opposition, ultimately it was the Tea Party GOP freshmen who passed these job-killing deals despite their campaign commitments at home to stand up for Main Street businesses, against more job offshoring and for Buy American requirements. The three pacts explicitly ban Buy America procurement policies. The Korea FTA is projected to increase the trade deficit, with seven U.S. industrial sectors hardest hit and job losses of 159,000 in its first seven years.

Members of Congress that voted for these job-killing agreements – backed by Wall Street and America's most notorious job-offshoring corporations and harmful to American workers, small business and consumers – will face a reckoning as the damage of these pacts hits home. We promise to closely track and publicize every development.

Everyone is asking what the Obama administration could have been thinking to push the sorts of NAFTA-style trade deals that polls show majorities of Democrats, Independents and even GOP voters oppose as job killers, especially after the lesson of the 1993 NAFTA vote, when a Democratic president's blurring of the distinctions between the parties on trade and jobs caused a disgruntled base to stay home.

Every election cycle, more Democrats and GOP are campaigning against these sorts of NAFTA-style trade pacts. Given this and the high unemployment rate, it will be very rough for those officials who then betrayed folks at home and voted for these deals loved only by Wall Street and job-offshoring corporations.

Record of Congressional Democratic Opposition to Democratic Presidents on Trade Pacts

- 82.3% of House Democrats opposed the Colombia FTA (158 Democrats against, 31 for)
- 67.7% of House Democrats opposed the Korea FTA (130 Democrats against, 59 for)
- 64.1% of House Democrats opposed the Panama FTA (123 Democrats against, 66 for)
- 60.6% of Democrats opposed NAFTA (1993)
- 35% opposed the WTO (1994)
- 65.56% opposed China PNTR (2000)

Record of Congressional Democratic Opposition to GOP Presidents on Trade Pacts

- 62.6% opposed the Chile FTA (2003)
- 62.14% opposed the Singapore FTA (2003)
- 41.3% opposed the Australia FTA (2004)
- 39.32% opposed the Morocco FTA (2004)
- 92.6% opposed the Central America Free Trade Agreement (2005)
- 40.4% opposed the Bahrain FTA (2005)
- 87.6% opposed the Oman FTA (2006)
- slightly more than half opposed the Peru FTA (2007)

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