



**SIERRA
CLUB**
FOUNDED 1892

For Immediate Release:
Feb. 17, 2011

Contact: Bryan Buchanan, Public Citizen - (202) 454-5108
Holly Shulman, Sierra Club - (202) 674-8757

As Part of International Campaign, Unions, Civil Society Organizations Demand Release of Trans-Pacific Trade Deal Texts

WASHINGTON, D.C – U.S. unions and civil society organizations sent a letter to the office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) demanding that it release the working texts of the Trans-Pacific Free Trade Agreement (FTA) currently under negotiation. The letter is part of a coordinated international “release the text” campaign with similar demand letters sent from civil society groups from five of the countries involved in the negotiations. The letters came as negotiations on the deal were held in Santiago, Chile, this week.

“President Obama has been a strong advocate for transparency in government, and our trade agreements should be no exception, especially a 'new, high-standard, 21st century trade agreement' like we hope the Trans-Pacific FTA will be," Margrete Strand Rangnes, director of Sierra Club's Responsible Trade Program.

Prior to this week, four rounds of Trans-Pacific FTA talks were conducted. The nine countries now involved plan to conclude talks before a November summit in Hawaii. Trans-Pacific FTA talks have taken place behind closed doors, and none of the draft texts has been released. This includes draft texts on the extremely sensitive issues of foreign investment and financial services, which were initially written in 2008 and are now the basis for current negotiations.

“Past trade negotiations have taken place in secrecy. While executives from hundreds of corporations were named official trade advisors and got access to the talks, most people whose lives were affected never got to see what our negotiators were bargaining for – and bargaining away – until it was all over,” said Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch. “This had led to all sorts of negative consequences, many of which the negotiators probably didn’t foresee or intend. We’ve got a chance to do it differently this time, but time is running out.”

There are benefits for the negotiators, too, in releasing the texts, the letter says. This is because a diverse array of knowledgeable observers and stakeholders would then be able to inform the process, which would help negotiators to better understand the consequences of various proposals.

The letter notes that even the World Trade Organization (WTO), hardly a bastion of transparency, now posts negotiating texts and countries’ position papers on its website for

scrutiny. All countries involved in TPP talks are WTO members. Some TPP countries also were involved in negotiations of the recently completed Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA). International civil society rejected the secrecy of that process, and its draft texts were eventually widely circulated.

“Citizens and legislators would never tolerate the text of domestic legislation being kept secret until it was passed, but this pact could require wide swaths of our domestic policies to be altered under terms that do not facilitate later modifications as governments or public demands change,” said James Ploeser, senior organizer for Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch. “The enforceability and permanence of such ‘trade agreement’ terms, with later changes requiring agreement by all of the signatory countries, necessitates extreme care and complete transparency on the front end.”

You can read the full letter, as well as other letters from the international campaign, here: <http://www.citizen.org/release-the-text-letters>.

###