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House Punts Fast Track Problem Back to Senate; Path to Approval Unclear

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

Today, the House employed yet another procedural gimmick to punt the Fast Track problem back to the Senate, where its fate remains at best unclear as Americans' concerns that more of the same trade policy would kill more jobs and push down our wages remain unaddressed.

Because Republican House members would not support the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) part of the Senate-passed Fast Track package last week, the GOP leadership today had to resort to a Fast Track-only vote, but what exactly that achieves is unclear. Senate Democrats, including those needed to obtain cloture for a stand-alone Fast Track bill, are demanding that the TAA be reinserted into the Fast Track bill or be passed by both chambers before agreeing to support Fast Track. In addition, key Democratic senators are insisting on the fulfillment by Senate Leader Mitch McConnell of a promised vote to reauthorize the Export-Import bank – which was the condition for the deciding bloc of Senate Democrats to support cloture on Fast Track in the first instance in May. Meanwhile, House GOP lawmakers remain strongly opposed to TAA and Ex-Im reauthorization. As House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi stated today, there is no clear path for enactment of TAA. Yet yesterday, White House spokesman Josh Earnest said that President Obama requires both Fast Track and TAA to come to his desk.

That two years of effort by a vast corporate coalition, the White House and GOP leaders – and weeks of procedural gimmicks and deals swapped for yes votes – has resulted in this continuing standoff and no Fast Track enacted spotlights the dim prospects not only for adoption of Fast Track but also for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

This weekend, the millions of Americans across the political spectrum actively campaigning against Fast Track will intensify their efforts to ensure the Senate permanently retires the Nixon-era scheme. America needs a new process for negotiating and approving trade agreements if we are to achieve deals that create American jobs and raise our wages.

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