

AFL-CIO: They Say, We Say on Fast Track & the Trans-Pacific Partnership

They Say: "Fast Track puts Congress in the Driver's Seat."

We Say: "Fast Track" puts Congress and the American public in the back seat. Fast Track surrenders Congress' constitutional authority over trade policy to the President and locks the public out of trade negotiations. The end result: a trade deal that Congress cannot improve and barely has time to read.

They Say: "Fast Track sets high standards for trade agreements."

We Say: Fast Track has *never* set high standards. The most recent trade deals to become law under Fast Track included a deal with [Colombia](#), a country in which nearly 3,000 labor leaders and protestors have been assassinated since 1986, and [Korea](#)—a country with which our trade deficit has grown enormously since the deal went into effect, costing the U.S. about 70,000 jobs so far. Even if the Fast Track bill *did* include high standards goals, it has **no** accountability mechanism that requires achieving those goals. It's essentially a blank check.

They Say: "We need Fast Track to keep the labor standards in the TPP high."

We Say: Fast Track **can't** ensure high labor standards. It has no accountability mechanism. The best way to ensure high labor standards in the TPP—and other provisions friendly to families and communities—is to stop Fast Track. Strong provisions for America's working families will only be included if the American public can fully participate in trade policy making. To do trade negotiating authority and trade deals right, we must end Fast Track.

They Say: "Fast Track and the TPP will create jobs."

We Say: Based on past trade deals, the TPP will kill jobs. NAFTA cost the U.S. almost [700,000](#) jobs and the Korea FTA has cost more than [60,000](#) jobs in its first years of existence. The U.S. trade deficit with Japan costs us jobs every year, yet the administration refuses to even put on the table a driver of that deficit: currency manipulation. To create jobs and raise wages, the focus of deals must be on raising living standards and increasing net exports—which means new ideas, not doing the same thing over again and expecting different results.

They Say: "Labor is at the negotiating table."

We Say: That's 100% false. About 5% of the trade advisors represent labor, and these advisors can review draft U.S. proposals. But they are locked out of the negotiating room and cannot see the negotiating texts. About 90% of cleared trade advisors represent business interests, and this overrepresentation translates into rules that favor business over workers.

They Say: "If we don't Fast Track the TPP, China will write the rules of international trade."

We Say: The TPP's rules appear to copy the corporate-rights framework of the NAFTA, KORUS, and other U.S. FTAs. Enshrining rules that favor global corporations over small businesses, family farms, and working people will further push wages down, increase inequality, and endanger the safety of our imports. China is a long-time currency manipulator and doesn't comply with the trade commitments it has already made in the WTO. China is likely to benefit from the TPP even without joining, for example through outward bound investment and export of intermediate parts. The TPP and Fast Track, which contain no enforceable rules on currency, are simply not credible vehicles to force China to play by rules good for U.S. workers.

They Say: "Fast Track and the TPP will be an improvement on the status quo."

We Say: Fast Track ensures trade deals are passed by Congress with as little deliberation as possible. Existing trade deals like NAFTA interfere with wage growth and good job creation. The TPP would be no different. Covering 40% of the world's GDP with ISDS, a private justice system that allows foreign investors to bypass American courts, would be **worse** than the status quo. Weak rules of origin that will allow China to benefit from the TPP without joining would be **worse** than the status quo. State-owned enterprise disciplines, intellectual property and procurement rules and labor and environmental commitments that are worse than they should be will **lock in** a set of global economic rules that may benefit a few, but will hurt average families.

Passing Fast Track limits Congress' ability to improve the trade agreements and would lock in economic rules that create a race to the bottom. That's *worse* than the status quo.

They Say: "Fast Track will help us move trade agreements that will boost wages and benefit the middle class."

We Say: If U.S. trade deals boosted wages and benefitted the middle class, you wouldn't need Fast Track to pass them. Real wages in the U.S. have been dropping or stagnant since NAFTA. Fast tracked deals give extraordinary legal tools to corporations who use them to play workers and nations off each other in a race to the bottom. U.S. workers have been forced to give back hard earned pay, pensions and seniority rights just to keep jobs in the U.S. According to the Economic Policy Institute, those who lose their jobs to trade often suffer permanent wage reductions. Even manufacturing jobs, a traditional pathway to the middle class, are now often low-wage jobs. According to a recent NELP study, over 600,000 manufacturing jobs in the U.S. now pay less than \$10 an hour.

To benefit the middle class, we need more than empty rhetoric about the benefits of trade, we need to invest in infrastructure and worker training, aggressive tools to address currency manipulation, progressive tax policies, and labor policies that will promote higher wages and benefits for hardworking families.

They Say: “Fast Track and the TPP will open markets and boost exports.”

We Say: Fast Track and the TPP aren't really about boosting U.S. exports: they are about increasing opportunities for U.S. companies to invest offshore and then export back to the United States with favorable tariff rates. This model enriches global companies, but does little for the workers in the U.S. who were laid off or foreign workers who toil in sweatshop conditions, denied fundamental rights. To the extent that trade policy can boost U.S. employment, it must focus on net exports, not just “exports.” It is not clear how the TPP will do that when Japan has notoriously closed markets that exclude not just American cars, but Korean cars too. In addition, when Vietnamese workers make about \$150 a month, it is hard to imagine Vietnam as a big new market for U.S. exports.

For five years, administration has refused to provide data on which industries are likely to see net export and job gains from the TPP. Trade can work for working people, but not when its rules focus on increasing rights for powerful global corporations instead of on tangible policies to promote good paying jobs for workers.

They Say: “We need Fast Track so that we can improve labor standards in Vietnam.”

We Say: Working people have heard these promises before and they've always been broken, from NAFTA to CAFTA to the Colombia FTA. Even the [Government Accountability Office](#) has recognized that the USTR and Department of Labor are failing to adequately enforce labor commitments in US trade agreements. What the TPP is likely to do is put a permanent ceiling on [labor rights](#) in Vietnam by requiring legal reforms that fall short of international standards and don't ensure that workers can act collectively to better their lives.

They Say: “Without Fast Track, the Republicans in Congress will strip the TPP of provisions that help workers.”

We Say: This is a red herring. If anyone in Congress tried to strip pro-worker provisions (however weak or strong) from the TPP or any trade deal, they would face efforts to strip or add a variety of other controversial provisions, from textile and auto rules to corporate goodies like ISDS. Moreover, allies of working families in the Senate—even those who misguidedly support bad trade deals—would filibuster any deal stripped of its pro-worker provisions. Finally, the President retains the power of veto. The result would be no deal at all—an unhappy result for the TPP's business advocates, but perhaps a win for workers.