



PRESS RELEASE

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Press Contact

Karen Hansen-Kuhn
Director of International Strategies
(202) 222-0749
khansenkuhn@iatp.org

Dale Wiehoff
VP for Communications and IT
(612) 870-3401
dwiehoff@iatp.org

About IATP

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota with an office in Washington D.C.

Fast Track bill undermines democracy, promotes secret mega-trade deals

Congress should reject Fast Track, chart a new course on trade

MINNEAPOLIS—Congress should reject a new bill that would grant the President Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), known as Fast Track. It would speed passage of two huge secret trade deals that would negatively impact farmers and ranchers, jobs, natural resources and our democracy, said the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP).

The new Fast Track bill introduced today follows the playbook of past Fast Track bills by allowing the President to negotiate two mega-trade deals in secret, and present a final version to Congress for an up or down vote—depriving Congress of its right to amend the finalized agreement. The two trade deals, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) would not only set rules for trade, but also cover national and local regulations.

“This afternoon’s introduction of the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015 (TPA-2015), i.e. Fast Track, is a cynical attempt to recast the abdication of congressional oversight, responsibility and accountability for massive new trade agreements,” said IATP’s President Juliette Majot. “While falsely promising that it will hold the President accountable to Congress for what the U.S. Trade Representative negotiates on our behalf, TPA-2015 fails completely to protect congressional authority to review and amend the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement. What TPA-2015 would do, is to cede that authority to the President, then give Congress and the public 60 days to see the agreement but not to actually do anything about it, except—under limited conditions—tell them to negotiate some more or give the whole thing one big thumbs up or thumbs down. This is no way to set trade policy in a democracy. Call it TPA-15, call it Fast Track, it’s still the wrong track.”

Earlier this week, IATP and more than 110 organizations sent a letter to Congress calling for the rejection of Fast Track, saying the secret trade agreements would be detrimental for farmers, ranchers and food systems. Proponents of Fast Track assert that future trade agreements will increase agricultural exports and jobs, but the letter called such projections simplistic and inaccurate. The groups wrote, “Many

of the same promises of expanded trade benefitting U.S. farmers and rural communities made during the debates for NAFTA, CAFTA and the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreements have failed to materialize. Instead, rural communities have been roiled by profound economic instability.”

“After months of debate and public pressure for a new approach to trade, the latest version of Fast Track for the most part simply repeats the same old tired objectives and makes no meaningful improvements in transparency,” said Karen Hansen-Kuhn, IATP’s International Strategies Director. “Farm, food and consumer groups have stated loud and clear that we need a new approach, not just a repeat of NAFTA and CAFTA.”

IATP has been a leading advocate for fair trade for more than 25 years and has written extensively on the impacts TPP and TTIP could have on farmers, ranchers, the food system, the environment and democratic rights.