

COMMENTARY

Editorials, letters, columns and other opinions

Stop Fast-Track Authority for Trans-Pacific Deal



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Michele Nash-Hoff

While the first Trade Promotion Authority cloture vote to place a 30-hour time limit on consideration of the bill failed in the Senate last Tuesday, the second vote passed on Thursday. Never

has a bill with such far reaching and profound effects moved through the law-making process in Congress so stealthily and with such scant media coverage.

Granting "fast-track authority" for trade agreements to the president gives too much power to the executive branch and takes it away from the legislative branch where it belongs according to the Constitution. It takes the power away from Congress by limiting the debate to only 20 hours and forbidding any amendments. It requires only a simple majority vote in each House instead of the supermajority required for treaties.

Governance Agreement

This fast-track authority would apply to the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement that has been in negotiation for more than five years without any involvement by Congress and any other agreement that comes up through 2021. The TPP is much more than a trade agreement; it is a Trade and Global Governance Agreement because only five of the 29 chapters relate to tariffs and quotas. The other 24 chapters cover domestic regulation, food and

product safety, financial regulation, investor state' rights, immigration, intellectual property, patents, copyrights, trademarks, immigration, environment, labor standards, and many other local, state, and federal laws. Provisions may even overrule prior acts of Congress without new legislation being introduced, passed in Congress, and signed by the president.

Say Bye to Buy American

For the manufacturing industry in which I play a role, the most adverse effect would be that the U.S. would have to agree to waive buy American procurement policies. What this means is that the TPP's procurement chapter would require that all companies operating in any country signing the agreement be provided access equal to domestic firms to bid on government procurement contracts at the local, state, and federal level. There are many companies that survived the recession and are in business today because of the buy American provisions for government procurement. The TPP could be a deathblow for many of our smaller defense contractors in the San Diego region and nationwide.

I am tired of hearing how beneficial free trade is. This is only true if a country benefits from the trade by exporting more than it imports. In 2014, the U.S. imported \$2.34 trillion in goods compared to exporting \$1.62 trillion in goods, resulting in a trade deficit of \$721.6 billion. Because of our surplus of services exports, our total trade deficit was reduced to \$505 billion. It's apparent that we are not benefitting

from our current trade agreements as we should and that another trade agreement with 11 more countries would only make our trade deficit much worse.

The TPP is the opposite of free trade. It is government controlled trade and is so overreaching on nontrade issues that it would control many aspects of the lives of all Americans, not just businesses.

Trading Away Jobs

It has been well documented that more than 800,000 jobs were lost because of NAFTA, 3.5 million manufacturing jobs lost due to China's entry into the WTO, and now nearly 60,000 jobs lost due to Korea Free Trade Agreement in only three years. Trade agreements seem to benefit only the large multinational global corporations and hurt smaller American-only companies. More than 95 percent of American manufacturers are companies with fewer than 100 employees, so the TPP would hurt far more companies than it would benefit.

There are still nearly 2 million fewer jobs than in December 2007, before the recession started. What good does it do to have cheaper consumer goods if you don't have a job?

The TPP and TTIP/TAFTA are bad for American companies, American workers, and American consumers. We must stop it in the House! Contact your Congressional representative to urge voting no on granting Fast Track Authority!

Michele Nash-Hoff is President of San Diego-based ElectroFab Sales and is chair of the California chapter of the Coalition for a Prosperous America.