



A bold voice for transportation workers

A TRADE POLICY THAT TRANSPORTATION WORKERS DESERVE

Transportation labor stands in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the labor movement in opposing Trade Promotion Authority, or “Fast Track.” For too long this flawed policy has guided our country’s trade laws, and it’s time for Congress to throw out the old model and develop a new plan that works for our nation’s transportation workers and enhances our collective competitiveness.

Transportation unions have seen first-hand what bad trade policies and unchecked globalization can do to quality, middle-class jobs. Bad policy changes in the late 1980’s that were geared toward globalization caused a scourge of outsourcing of aircraft maintenance jobs that has reached epidemic levels today. While we were once the world leader in train and bus manufacturing, the U.S. is now dependent on foreign rolling stock manufacturers, with our existing domestic supply chain largely in place due to Buy America laws. Globalization and deregulation in the maritime industry allowed the normalization of “Flag of Convenience” and the decimation of the U.S.-flag fleet, which is now down to fewer than 100 vessels. And now a rogue airline (Norwegian Air International) threatens to bring the same model to the U.S. marketplace, which would threaten good jobs and bargaining rights. Until the U.S. government changes business as usual and pursues policies that put American workers and businesses first, we will continue this damaging cycle.

Fast Track, in the form it’s taken for the past four decades, is the foundation upon which our flawed and damaging trade policy is based. Under Fast Track, Congress abdicates its constitutional authority over international trade and hands the administration a blank check to negotiate as it pleases and with whomever it wants. This has resulted in deals that are negotiated behind closed doors and are driven by corporate special interests. Members of Congress are only able to review the agreements when negotiations are completed and the deals are signed. They have no opportunity to amend the agreement, and must instead vote up or down on whatever the administration sends over. This undemocratic process stifles the voices of working people, and has led us down the path of bad trade deals and serial outsourcing.

Despite the fact that Fast Track was allowed to expire in 2007, our government has continued to engage in expansive trade talks, including the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA). These trade agreements unfortunately have followed the same models as past failed deals. Unless we dramatically change our approach to trade, these deals will continue to put workers last, send jobs overseas, and diminish America’s competitiveness.

Changing this approach starts with ending Fast Track as we know it, and adopting a new policy that brings accountability to the process, encourages democratic input, and that puts American workers first. From a transportation perspective this includes keeping critical aviation and maritime regulations off of the trading blocks, blocking any efforts to weaken or undermine transportation Buy America and other important domestic procurement provisions, and ensuring that critical transportation safety and security regulations are not undermined by expansive trade deals that favor corporate interests.

Our nation's trade goals should be clear: enhance American industries, put workers in a position to succeed, and promote strong labor, safety and human rights laws in this country and with our trading partners. It's time that the old Fast Track model is thrown out. We need a trade policy that works for transportation workers.

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