



# LEGISLATIVE ALERT

April 23, 2015

Dear Representative,

**Fast Track: Vote No**  
**Right Track: Vote Yes**

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I write urging you to oppose H.R. 1890, the Hatch-Wyden-Ryan “Fast Track 2015” legislation and support the alternative "Right Track for TPP Act of 2015" proposed by Ranking Member Levin.

The misnamed “Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015” (Fast Track 2015) is unfortunately another reincarnation of prior, failed “Fast Track” policy. It gives the executive branch the opportunity to negotiate—in secret and out of public view—as many trade agreements as it can through at least June 30, 2018 and send them to Congress, which may then only vote yes or no.

Fast Track 2015 fails to hold the executive branch accountable for achieving negotiating objectives, addressing the job-killing U.S. trade imbalance (which currently stands at \$505 billion), or ensuring that trade deals do not continue the current race to the bottom in terms of pay and benefits, worker rights, environmental protections, access to affordable medicines, food safety rules, and other vital protections for working families. In short, it will do little, if anything, to prevent repeating the mistakes of failed trade policies that have contributed to stagnating wages, increasing inequality, and the closure of more than 60,000 factories since 2000.

The AFL-CIO has been clear that any new Trade Promotion Authority must accomplish the following:

- Ensure Congress approves trade agreement partners before negotiations begin;
- Create negotiating objectives that are specific to the trade partners involved and advance a trade model that provides balanced, inclusive benefits rather than a corporate-rights agenda;
- Ensure that Congress, not the executive branch, determines whether Congressional trade objectives have been met and whether agreements qualify for expedited consideration;
- Ensure Congress has effective opportunities to strip expedited consideration provisions from trade deals that fail to meet Congressional objectives or to incorporate Congressional and public participation;
- Increase access to U.S. trade policy making, trade proposals, and negotiating text for Congress, congressional staff, and the public;
- Be part of a larger trade and competitiveness package that addresses shortcomings in existing trade enforcement and remedies and provides complementary domestic economic policies (like infrastructure investment, worker education, and skills training) that will help ensure that *all* can benefit from trade, not just a few.

Hatch-Wyden-Ryan fails on every single criterion. Should amendments be offered at Committee to improve this bill that meet or exceed these criteria, we will support their passage, fully realizing that improvements around the margins will not be enough to improve the overall failings of this legislation.

It is the AFL-CIO's position that the Right Track alternative proposed by Ranking Member Levin represents a strong improvement over traditional Fast Track legislation. It limits trade promotion authority only to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and provides mandatory oversight and instructions from Congress, as opposed to the unenforceable and aspirational objectives in Fast Track. USTR Ambassador Froman and other TPP-nation trade ministers have recently made it clear: the TPP negotiations are almost finished. They are not interested in further input by Congress. Granting Fast Track to the Administration would be giving USTR *carte blanche* to finish TPP with no requirement to heed input from Congress. The Levin alternative would ensure that Congressional marching orders given to USTR must be certified as achieved by both the House and Senate advisors before the agreement could be completed.

Fast Track 2015 simply fails to live up to its promises. America's working families cannot afford more trade policy made by and for global corporations and economic elites—trade policy that does nothing more than shrink paychecks and further diminish America's struggling middle class. We urge you to vote NO on H.R. 1890 and YES on the Levin Right Track alternative.

### **Trade Preferences: Vote Yes**

The AFL-CIO urges a yes vote on the “AGOA Extension and Enhancement Act” of 2015, which renews the African Growth and Opportunity Act, the Generalized System of Preferences GSP, and the HOPE and HELP programs for Haiti.

The AGOA Extension and Enhancement Act of 2015 includes some important AGOA reforms advocated by the AFL-CIO, including the greater flexibility to withdraw, suspend, or limit benefits when eligibility criteria are not met. This new flexibility will provide more tools to increase compliance with worker rights and other criteria than the previous ‘all-or-nothing’ system. In addition, we are pleased that our recommendation to create a public input and hearing system to review country eligibility on a regular basis was included.

Although we are disappointed that other reforms, such as new eligibility criteria requiring democratic forms of governance and freedom from workplace discrimination, and increased U.S. investment in infrastructure, education, and rights-based capacity building were not included, we will continue our efforts to ensure that U.S. development policies go beyond mere tariff reduction.

Linking this legislation to controversial Fast Track policies could prevent its timely renewal. We oppose combining this beneficial legislation with any Fast Track legislation.

### **Trade Adjustment Assistance**

Although the AFL-CIO strongly supports renewal of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), a vital program to help retrain workers who lose jobs to trade, H.R. 1892, the “Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA), and for other purposes of 2015” falls short in many areas.

First, this bill cynically utilizes a pay-for extending the sequester on Medicare by cutting \$700 million from the program. This is more than troublesome as it erodes Medicare's capacity to ensure access to medical

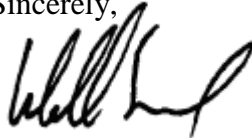
services, and it pits individuals who need assistance from TAA against Medicare beneficiaries. It also fails to include a minimum of \$575 million annual funding, as the Administration has previously requested for the program and as sought in H.R. 1088 (Smith/Levin TAA); it excludes public sector workers from coverage; and it fails to raise the Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC) from a maximum of 72.5% to 80%.

Without improvements, the Reichert TAA bill is inadequate. We support measures that would restore funding to higher levels, cover public sector workers, increase the HCTC, and alter the pay-for. As the United States seeks to expand trade, it cannot at the same time cut vital training and assistance to dislocated workers.

**Levin Trade Enforcement and Competitiveness Package--Support**

We support measures that could include H.R. 820, the Currency Reform for Fair Trade Act, ENFORCE Act, Leveling the Playing Field Act, Super 301, and other important enforcement and competitiveness legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Samuel", written in a cursive style.

William Samuel, Director  
Government Affairs Department

WS/BG/lkr