



NALC Fact Sheet

Department of Government and Political Affairs — National Association of Letter Carriers

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The postal connection to ‘fast track’

The House and Senate are in negotiations regarding so-called “fast track” legislation that has been crafted to allow the Obama administration (and any future administration) to negotiate international trade agreements in secret and to push them through Congress on a straight up-or-down vote, with no chance to amend them.

What is the impact? Trade deals are just as likely to destroy American jobs as they are to create them, and they clearly drive down U.S. wages.

Two agreements currently under negotiation—the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and U.S-European Union Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP)—are even more dangerous. If implemented, they would undermine America’s democracy by giving multi-national corporations special rights to challenge approved labor and environmental regulations.

TPP and T-TIP are being negotiated in secret and are designed to protect the interests of multi-national corporations, not workers or citizens. They are focused on investment rules, corporate rights and the ability of countries to regulate in the public interest.

Consider:

- These agreements threaten to weaken or eliminate labor and health-and-safety laws, prohibit domestic content policies (“Buy American”) in government procurement, and force countries to compensate companies for profits lost to new environmental regulations.
- These agreements can establish private tribunals to resolve disputes outside of our court system—tribunals that are secret and unaccountable to voters.
- “Fast track” would only allow a quick vote on TPP and T-TIP as well as a number of other trade agreements under negotiation.

What is the postal connection? The World Trade Organization (WTO) is sponsoring the negotiation of a Trade in Services Agreement (TISA) among dozens of countries, while the U.S. government is in bilateral talks with the European Union on T-TIP, an agreement that would cover the U.S.’s economic interaction with the E.U.’s 27 member countries.

In these negotiations, the Europeans are calling for the

U.S. to phase out the U.S. Postal Service’s monopoly on the delivery of letter mail, based on the phase-out policy adopted by the E.U. between 1992 and 2011.

In other words, both T-TIP and TISA are direct threats to letter carrier jobs and the Postal Service’s affordable universal network.

In addition, NALC’s application for a seat on an industry trade advisory committee was denied on the grounds that we represent government employees, even though Wall Street banks are using TPP negotiations to prohibit postal banking while European countries are seeking to repeal postal monopolies in the TISA and T-TIP negotiations. *We and the rest of the American public are being shut out of the secret trade negotiations.*

Trade deals have the potential to deregulate USPS:

While we do not believe that the Obama administration would agree to postal deregulation in a larger trade agreement, the decisions made now on trade will last for years—so there is no guarantee that future administrations won’t agree to postal deregulation.

- If the current White House administration, or a future one, agreed to end the postal monopoly as part of a larger trade deal, USPS’ system of affordable universal service would collapse.
- If the current White House administration, or a future one, agreed to a deal that prohibits postal banking, the Postal Service would miss the opportunity to serve 68 million Americans who are unbanked or under-banked (as determined by the latest Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation survey on access to financial services).
- Wall Street banks in particular are aggressively lobbying against postal banking and do not want to see the success of Japan Post’s bank replicated elsewhere.

What is the bottom line? The entire AFL-CIO—as well as non-affiliated unions such as Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Teamsters and the National Education Association (NEA)—are united in opposition to “fast track” authority, and we urge members of the House and Senate to oppose any legislation that would allow negotiation of trade deals behind closed doors.