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News Release

“WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON, CROWLEY?”

Singing Grandmas; Puppeteers; Performance Artists; Veterans; Union Members; Environmental, Food Safety, & AIDS Activists; Neighborhood Business Owners and Residents Call on Rep. Crowley to Break Silence, Oppose Fast Tracking Dangerous Secret Trade Deal at Jackson Heights Rally

Jobs, Environment, and Access to Affordable Medicines at Stake, Say Activists

Photos, Videos Available at <http://tradejustice.net/cro131final>

Queens, NY – At a rally on Friday, at Rep. Joe Crowley’s Queens district office, more than 125 protesters called on the Queens and Bronx Congressman to announce opposition to Fast Tracking the controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a 12 nation NAFTA-style free trade agreement that faces fierce opposition from labor unions; faith groups; and environmental, anti-poverty, AIDS, internet freedom, banking reform, animal rights, economic justice, and food safety advocates. The rally, co-sponsored by more than 60 organizations, was one of over 50 protests Friday marking the 20th anniversary of NAFTA and opposing TPP, a trade deal described at “NAFTA on Steroids.” The Queens protest featured:

- 14 speakouts – by a lay minister, veterans, a local business owner, union members, veterans and activists.
- a “Tug O’ Crowley” street theater performance where an actor playing Rep. Crowley, holding a prop of Congress, was pulled in one direction by monster characters representing corporate polluters, banks, and billionaire investors and in the other by workers, environmentalists, people of faith, and other community members.
- a sendup of Crowley’s “Speechless” testimony on the floor of Congress (<http://tradejustice.net/speechless>).
- Songs about Rep. Crowley and TPP by the NYC Metro Raging Grannies including “Which Side Are You On, Crowley? “Which Side are You On, Crowley”, “Bye Bye TPP” (to the tune of “Bye Bye Blackbird”), “Crony Capitalists” (to the tune of My Little Playmate)

Congressman Crowley is one of only two House Democrats in New York State who has not expressed opposition to Fast Tracking TPP, an agreement that public interests groups call, the “the end of democracy.” TPP investment chapter enables foreign corporations to sue the US government for unlimited sums in international tribunals outside the jurisdiction of the US court system when they believe federal, state or local US environmental, consumer protection, and other public interest laws interfere with their potential future profits. As a result of similar provisions in trade agreements currently in force, Canada is being sued over a ban on hydrofracking in Quebec. Activists argue that TPP will also outsource jobs to sweatshops, undermine organized labor’s negotiating power, and prohibit “Buy Local” and “Buy American” government purchasing rules designed to create and protect US jobs and stimulate our economy. Activists also fear that TPP will replace family farms with factory farms and genetically modified crops, threaten internet freedom, endanger wildlife, encouraging the privatization of public services, increase imports of contaminated food, prohibit vitally needed banking regulations, and raise the cost of lifesaving medications.

President Obama has requested Fast Track Authority, which would allow his administration to complete negotiations on TPP and then send the agreement to be voted on in Congress within 90 days. Under Fast Track, floor debate is limited and amendments are prohibited, meaning that our elected officials will be unable to rewrite or remove TPP’s provisions that activists consider harmful. Fast Track has been introduced in the Senate by Finance Committee Chair Max Baucus, a Democrat, and in the House by Ways and Means Committee Chair Dave Camp, a Republican. As of yet, the Obama administration has been unable to find a Democratic cosponsor for Fast Track, considered essential to winning the Democratic votes necessary to pass the bill. As a high ranking member of the House Democratic Caucus and a strong supporter of free trade agreements, Rep. Crowley is a likely candidate to potentially sponsor the bill. Since 2006, Crowley has voted for every trade agreement to come before Congress, despite opposition by human rights, environmental, consumer advocacy, and labor rights advocates.

“TPP could spell disaster for communities seeking to protect themselves from public health and environmental dangers like fracking,” said Corinne Rosen, a senior organizer with Food & Water Watch, a consumer protection group. “This monstrous trade deal is a boon for multinational corporations that seek to profit at the expense of American jobs and American health and safety standards.”

"Fast Track is the wrong track for Rep. Crowley's constituents. Congressman Crowley had the good sense to vote against Fast Track in 2002, but he needs to let us know where he stands now - with the corporations who want to offshore New York jobs to overseas sweatshops or with the working families of Queens and the Bronx," said Megan McGee of Crowley Constituents for TradeJustice.

Endorsing organizations of the rally included TradeJustice New York Metro, 350 NYC, Americans Organized for Change, Backbone Campaign, Bayan USA, Big Apple Coffee Party, Building Bridges: Your Community and Labor Report (WBAI FM), Bronx Greens, Coalition Against the Rockaway Pipeline, Corporate Campaign, Inc., Crowley Constituents for Trade Justice, Dr May Edward Chinn Memorial Food Bank & Clinic, Eco-Logic (WBAI FM), Expose the TPP New York, Expose The TPP – USA, Families for Freedom, Freedom Socialist Party, Flush the TPP, Global Justice for Animals and the Environment, Goosewatch NYC, Granny Peace Brigade, Green Ecosocialist Movement, Fight for the Future, Food and Water Watch, Health Global Access Project, The Hispanic Coalition NY, Inc., Mingas NY, MoveOn Long Island and New York City Councils (Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens), NY Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, NY Environmental Law and Justice Project, NY Faith and Justice, NYC Friends of Clearwater, NYC Metro Raging Grannies and Their Daughters, Occupy Info (#NYCGA Info Working Group), Occupy Sandy Occupy Wall Street Outreach Working Group, Occupy Wall Street Special Projects Affinity Group, Occupy the Pipeline, Occupy Wall Street Trade Justice Working Group, People's Puppets of Occupy Wall St., Peace Action Manhattan, Peace Action of Staten Island, Penley Global Law, Peruanista, PopularResistance.org, Queerocracy, Radical Women, Resistance Cinema, Sane Energy Project, Socialist Alternative Queens Branch, Staten Island Community Tool Library, Stop Stop and Frisk Freedom Fighters, Student Global AIDS Campaign, Teraza 7, United for Action, United for Peace and Justice, United Students for Fair Trade, Veterans for Peace Chapter 34, Wetlands Activism Collective, West Queens Greens, Win Animal Rights, World War 4 Report, and Youth International Party (Yippies).

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