Fast Track

"Fast Track" is the process that gives the executive branch the authority to negotiate and write trade agreements and delegates away Congress' constitutional power to set the terms of U.S. trade policy. Fast Track creates special rules for considering trade agreements by allowing the executive branch to sign an agreement before Congress votes on it and only gives Congress 90 days to vote on the trade deal.

Under Fast Track, the president is authorized to negotiate trade agreements with foreign countries without consulting Congress or state legislators. After the executive branch locks down the terms of the deal and writes the implementing legislation, Congress is only permitted a yes or no vote, while states are virtually left out of the process. Thus, state and congressional officials elected to represent the public interest have no role in the process but to approve or disapprove the whole package.

Fast Track renewal was slipped through Congress at midnight in 2002 by only two votes. On June 30, 2007, the current grant of Fast Track, now called "Trade Promotion Authority" by its supporters, expired. Fast Track is not needed to approve trade agreements, a fact proven by the dozens of trade agreements that have been passed without its use (such as the Jordan FTA, China PNTR, etc.). Fast Track unnecessarily creates a situation where negotiators cannot be held accountable by the public, and legislators are denied their constitutional authority to set the terms of trade agreements.

In recent years, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) has used Fast Track to push dozens of controversial pacts through Congress including: the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), and dozens of trade agreements with countries such as Chile, Singapore, Morocco, Australia, Bahrain and Oman. Trade negotiations have been accelerated to an alarming speed, denying legislators and the public the appropriate time to consider the serious ramifications of these agreements.