

# **TRADEJUSTICE**

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## **Opponents Agree: Grimm and Recchia Announce Opposition to Controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership Trade Deal at Staten Island Community Forum**

On Wednesday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, Representative Michael Grimm and his Democratic opponent in the November election, Dominick Recchia both announced their opposition to granting President Obama Fast Track trade negotiating authority and to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a proposed 12 nation free trade agreement currently in its fifth year of negotiation, at a panel discussion on the TPP held by Staten Island community groups and labor unions at the union hall of ATU Local 726 on 3948 Amboy Road in Staten Island.

Congressman Grimm had previously expressed his opposition to Fast Track in a letter signed by six moderate House Republicans to President Obama in November 2013 and again at a rally and press conference at City Hall in January, but Wednesday marked the first time he has publicly committed to oppose the TPP and the first time Mr. Recchia has committed to oppose both Fast Track and the TPP

TPP has faced fierce criticism from groups across the political spectrum. Labor unions, environmental organizations, advocates for people with AIDS, internet freedom activists, family farm and food safety defenders, argue that TPP is little more than a giveaway to corporate interests. Tea Party and other liberty groups argue that TPP undermines US sovereignty by granting foreign investors the ability to bring lawsuits in international tribunals outside the jurisdiction of the US court system, where they can demand unlimited sums in monetary compensation when they believe US law prevents their potential future profits.

Members of Congress and public interest advocates have also decried an unprecedented level of secrecy in TPP negotiations. The United States Trade Representative has severely restricted Congressional access to negotiating texts. Meanwhile 600 trade advisers, mostly representing corporate interests, have access to TPP negotiating texts and have been using that access to wield undue influence on US negotiating positions. Requests to USTR to address key congressional concerns have apparently been ignored on issues like addressing currency manipulation and holding the line on a strong and enforceable environmental chapter.

In expressing opposition to Fast Track, Recchia joins with 151 House Democrats and 28 House Republicans who have expressed strong opposition to Fast Track in the form of 3 letters to President Obama, believing that it undermines the Constitution's Commerce Clause (Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3), which grants Congress, not the White House, the power to "regulate commerce with foreign nations." According to letter signed by 22 House Republicans, "Under Fast Track, the executive branch is empowered to sign trade deals before Congress has an opportunity to vote on them, and then unilaterally write legislation making the pacts' terms U.S. Federal law. Fast Track allows the president to send these executive branch-authored bills directly to the floor for a vote under rules prohibiting all floor amendments and limiting debate. And by requiring the House to vote on the bill within a preset period of time, it takes the floor schedule out of the hands of the House majority and gives it to the president."

"No matter who wins in November, voters in Staten Island, Bay Ridge, and Bensonhurst will elect a Representative who recognizes that the last thing New York needs are the job-killing "NAFTA on Steroids" Trans-Pacific Partnership and the archaic Fast Track trade authority that shreds our Constitution in favor of corporate special interests," said Adam Weissman of TradeJustice New York Metro.

According to Steve Lawton of Communication Workers of America Local 1102 "President Obama needs to follow Grimm and Recchia's example and dump the wildly unpopular Fast Track and TPP if he doesn't want to throw the 2014 and 16 elections to his Republican opponents."

**Congressman Grimm's letter, Mr. Recchia's speech, and photos and video from the June 25<sup>th</sup> forum, including the full presentations of all speakers can be found at <http://tradejustice.net/siforum>.**