

Media Release for Wednesday, February 25, 2015

Contact:

Pete Sikora, Communications Workers of America psikora@cwa-union.org 917-648-7786

Nancy Goldstein, Working Families, ngoldstein@workingfamilies.org 718-222-3796

Eric Weltman, Food and Water Watch, eweltman@fwwatch.org 617-304-5330

Jessica Ramos, New Visions Democratic Club, 347-837-1547, jesoram@gmail.com

Nobel Prize Winner Joseph Stiglitz in Queens to Urge Rep. Crowley to Oppose Fast Track and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)

Speaks at Forum Convened by Community, Labor & Advocacy Groups Fighting to Stop the Deal

A diverse set of organizations and unions are uniting with community groups to fight Fast Track and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a trade deal being negotiated in secret between the United States and 11 Pacific Rim countries including Malaysia, Mexico, Japan, and Vietnam. If enacted, the TPP will destroy jobs and allow multinational corporations to challenge environmental, consumer, food safety, and even Buy American laws.

At today's large community meeting in Jackson Heights, Professor Stiglitz and the organizations called upon Congressional Representative Joe Crowley to once again oppose Fast Track, an expedited voting process to ram the TPP through Congress. The TPP would cover 40% of the world economy. Other countries such as China could join the deal once it was enacted. Previous trade agreements have been sold on the promise of more jobs, but have instead led to job losses and growing inequality.

"The Trans-Pacific Partnership risks fueling growing income inequality throughout the world while putting life-saving medication prices out of the reach of citizens in the affected countries," said Professor Joseph Stiglitz. "Today's trade agreements affect far more than just trade and are the wrong model to embrace. Congress has to step up to stop this bad deal."

US House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Paul Ryan has announced that Fast Track legislation will soon be introduced in his committee. Representative Joseph Crowley is a member of the Committee and has voted against Fast Track legislation in the past.

"Bad past trade deals have cost New York State tens of thousands of jobs. We simply can't afford another trade agreement like the TPP, written in secret by global CEOs, that would undermine our ability to protect our workers, labor standards, and economy," said Bill Lipton, Director, New York Working Families Party.

Besides increasing outsourcing of jobs, the TPP would raise prescription drug prices and gut food safety, environmental, economic and consumer regulations that protect people and the economy from Wall Street banks and other corporate interests. The deal would allow

multinational corporations to sue national, state and local governments in private trade courts to overturn laws covered by the agreement that would impede their “expected future profits”.

“Communities throughout the nation are finally beginning to act against dangerous practices like fracking, which threaten our health and environment. But the TPP would strip our power to protect local communities from such dangers, and it would give free reign to multinational fossil fuel corporations that are motivated only by profit. For the sake of our health and safety, Congressman Crowley must reject fast-tracking of the TPP” - Eric Weltman, senior organizer, Food & Water Watch,” said Eric Weltman, Senior Organizer, Food & Water Watch.

New York’s ban on fracking is an example of a regulation that could be open to challenge by multinational corporations if the TPP is enacted.

“The fracking ban, of course, is not the only regulation that could be challenged by multinational corporations. Any protections of our water, land, air and food could be subject to lawsuits in transnational courts motivated by corporate desire for the highest profit at all other costs -- any past, present or future regulation. Truly, this defies all decency. We urge Rep. Crowley to oppose Fast Track and the TPP,” said Stephanie Low from the Sierra Club’s Atlantic Chapter

Queens has suffered job losses in industries ranging from manufacturing to call centers. Economists estimate that approximately 20% of US jobs could be outsourced to other countries.

“New York State has lost over 1,000 call center jobs to offshoring from just one company, Verizon, and we’ve lost over 5 million American manufacturing jobs,” said Chris Shelton, Vice President, CWA District One. “We need agreements that lift global standards, not fuel a race to the bottom. We call on Representative Crowley to once again stand up for working people by opposing Fast Track and the TPP.”

Trade Promotion Authority, or “Fast Track,” is an expedited process that strips away the rights of members of Congress to debate and amend the trade deal and requires an up-or-down vote with limited debate. Many members of Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, have publicly declared their opposition to Fast Track. Virtually all of the Democrats in the NYS delegation have announced their opposition to Fast Track.

“Our message to our Congressman Joseph Crowley is this: You've voted against fast-tracking free trade agreements before and we need you to do it again. We are outraged at the secretive negotiation of the Trans-Pacific Partnership that not only leaves working Americans in the dark, but also threatens our jobs and our food safety, said Jessica Ramos of the New Visions Democratic Club.

A wide range of organizations sponsored today’s forum, including: BAYAN USA; Big Apple Coffee Party; CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities; Churches United for Fair Housing; Communications Workers of America; District Council 9 Painters & Allied Trades; Eco-Logic of WBAI-FM; Flush the TPP; Food & Water Watch; Global Justice for Animals and the Environment; GooseWatch NYC; Health GAP (Global Access Project); Make the Road New York; MoveOn NYC

Councils; New Visions Democratic Club; New York Buyers' Club; New York Communities for Change; NYC District Council of Carpenters; NYS Council of Machinists; Occupy Wall Street Zapatista Solidarity Network; Polo Democratico Alternativo NY; Popular Resistance; Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch; Rainforest Relief; Roosevelt Avenue Community Alliance (RACA); Sane Energy Project; Sierra Club - Atlantic Chapter; Sierra Club NYC Group; Socialist Alternative Queens Branch; Somos los Otros NY por Ayotzinapa; Stephanie Low Artists, Inc.; Terraza 7; TradeJustice New York Metro; and the Working Families Party.