

TRADEJUSTICE

New York Metro

News Release

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PHOTOS, VIDEO:

PROTESTERS FROM 100+ ORGANIZATIONS BRAVE BLIZZARD TO DENOUNCE OPENING OF SECRET MANHATTAN NEGOTIATIONS FOR OBAMA-BACKED TRADE DEAL

Activists Call on Senator Schumer to Oppose Fast Track Trade Legislation

On Monday, January 26th at 12PM, protesters from environmental, health, labor, peace, animal rights, anti-nuclear, feminist, food safety, internet freedom, international solidarity, economic justice, Indigenous rights, third party, and other advocacy groups braved snow, hail, wind, and freezing temperatures to rally at the opening of the first-ever New York round of talks for the secretive Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement at the Sheraton New York Times Square Hotel at **811 Seventh Ave. at West 52nd Street in Manhattan**. The rally was followed by a march and second rally at the office of Senator Charles Schumer, a member of the Senate Finance Committee, calling on him to oppose legislation to Fast Track TPP through Congress at a Finance Committee hearing on Tuesday, January 27th.

Monday's protest came less than a week after President Obama hailed TPP at his State of the Union Address and one day before Senate and House hearings on proposed new Fast Track Trade Authority legislation. Five years into talks for the 12 nation Pacific rim trade deal, the Obama administration and participating governments still refuse to release TPP negotiating texts to the public, a lack of transparency with no precedent in prior trade negotiations. Leaked documents released by Wikileaks and others have led public interests groups to charge that the TPP will lead to more jobs being transferred overseas; increased attacks on environmental, safety and health regulations; increased prices in medications; and the undermining of laws that reign in financial speculation.

In order to ensure that TPP is successfully passed by Congress, President Obama has asked Congress to grant him Fast Track Trade Authority. If Congress votes to grant such authority, a completed trade deal is presented to Congress on a "take it or leave it" basis whereby Congress can vote yes or no on the deal without rights to change so much as a comma, with limited debate and a shortened period of time before it is required to vote. But Obama's push for Fast Track has been met stiff resistance from Democrats in both the House and the Senate, as well as from some House Republicans.

A 2013 study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research found that TPP will reduce the US median wage. Workers earn more than the bottom quarter of wage earners (whose wages are influenced by minimum wage laws) and less than \$87,000 per year will see lost wages as a result of TPP.

In a letter to President Obama, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) wrote that, "the TPP has the potential to become the most harmful trade pact ever for access to medicines...stringent intellectual property (IP) provisions... will roll back public health safeguards and flexibilities enshrined in international law, and put in place far-reaching monopoly protections that will restrict generic competition and keep medicine prices unaffordable."

TPP will contain controversial Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions that allow a private investor in one TPP nation to demand unlimited sums in monetary compensation from another TPP nation in an international tribunal when the investor believes that the defendant nation's public interest laws and regulations interfere with the investor's expected future profits. Québec's province-wide ban on fracking has been challenged under similar rules in NAFTA, and under TPP New York's newly implemented ban on fracking will likely be subject to challenge by corporations in Japan, the world's largest importer of liquid natural gas.

According to Pete Dolack of TradeJustice New York Metro, "The Obama administration wants TPP go from being negotiated in secret to being Fast Tracked through Congress with minimal opportunity for scrutiny by Congress or the public and zero opportunity for members of Congress to modify the agreement's most egregious provisions. From what we know of the agreement via leaks, it's not hard to see why – the Obama administration has betrayed the 99% and negotiated a massive corporate rights agreement that threatens our jobs and wages; undermines internet freedom, environmental protection, and the democratic process while threatening access to safe and affordable food, water, and medicines."

Photos, videos, list of endorsing organizations, and media kit at <http://tradejustice.net/jan26>