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## Crowley urged to oppose TPP



A masked protester (r.) is among dozens to rally outside U.S. Rep. Joseph Crowley's office against the fast tracking of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement. Photo by Kelsey Durham

By Kelsey Durham



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Protesters use musical instruments to send out their message. Photo by Kelsey Durham

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Some participants wear costumes and carry signs showing their opposition to the TPP agreement. Photo by Kelsey Durham

Dozens of protesters took to the sidewalk Friday outside the office of U.S. Rep. Joseph Crowley (D-Jackson Heights) in

hopes of persuading him to vote against the fast-tracking of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement that opponents fear would send thousands of American jobs overseas.



The group swarmed Crowley's Jackson Heights office, at 82-11 37th Ave., wearing costumes and carrying picket signs showing their opposition to the TPP agreement, which many people in the crowd referred to as "NAFTA 2.0."

President Barack Obama has supported the agreement, arguing it would stabilize the American economy by increasing exports and creating more jobs, but those against the pact say it would do just the opposite and a significant number of American union employees would lose their jobs in favor of outsourcing work to the Far East.

The protesters said Crowley, who serves as vice chairman of the Democratic Caucus, is one of just a handful of congressional members who have not yet spoken out against fast-tracking the agreement through the House of Representatives, a process which they worry would take away the opportunity for debate or to express opposition.

Groups of rally members marched up and down the sidewalk singing songs, asking Crowley to adopt their stance on the issue and chanting several phrases, including "No fast-track, Crowley."

"We want to make sure he votes no," said Elliot Crown as he helped hand out signs. "We're all different people here, we're not all the same, but we do all agree about the TPP. It's got to stop."

Crowley has voted against trade agreements in the past, including the Central American Free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement, but those opposed to the TPP are growing weary over his hesitation to announce a position.

Alex Florez, spokesman for Crowley, pointed out after the rally that although the measure has not yet come up for a vote this year, he did vote against Obama's Trade Promotion Authority legislation when it last appeared before Congress.

"One of the most important parts of his job is hearing from constituents and Congressman Crowley appreciates those who visited his office to share their views," Florez said. "The congressman votes on trade agreements based on their individual merit

Some participants in the rally carried signs and yelled chants contending that the process of fast-tracking legislation through Congress was unconstitutional.

Ian Gray, of the Bronx, said he came to the rally in hopes that lawmakers would see there are people against this process.

"I feel extremely strongly opposed to the idea of fast-tracking because it gives the opposition no chance to be heard," said Gray. "If we can have a grassroots movement like this, hopefully it will catch fire. This is just one representative in one office in one neighborhood, but hopefully it gets some attention and it can be contagious."

Crowley did not appear at the rally, but protesters said they hoped their efforts have persuaded him to consider all points of view before casting his vote.

"We have to put pressure on him," said Walter Ditman, who has lived in Crowley's Jackson Heights district for more than 20 years. "He has to walk the walk, not just talk the talk."

Reach reporter Kelsey Durham at 718-260-4573 or by e-mail at [kdurham@cnglocal.com](mailto:kdurham@cnglocal.com).