

TPP Threatens the Lives of People w/ HIV/AIDS

(Portions of this flier were adapted from an article in The Advocate by

Peter Maybarduk, director of Public Citizen's Global Access to Medicines Program – <http://citizen.org/access>)

U.S. AIDS policy is in tension with U.S. trade policy. Generic competition drove the 99% price reductions for first-line medicine which facilitated the treatment revolution, lowering costs from \$10,000 per person per year (ppy) to under \$100 ppy today. But now the United States is negotiating a Trans-Pacific Free Trade Agreement (also known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) with terms intended, over time, to expand drug patent monopolies for about half the world...The high costs of patent monopolies, particularly for newer second- and third-line HIV/AIDS medicines — still commonly thousands of dollars per person per year seriously limit the ability of governments and donors to scale up treatment access. High prices force impossible choices for health departments allocating fixed budgets insufficient to meet all of their public health obligations. Aid programs including the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief struggle to expand current treatment levels.

New science shows treatment is also effective as prevention. Perhaps for the first time, practitioners can model an end to the pandemic. But "getting to zero" will require dramatically increasing treatment access worldwide. To continue the treatment revolution and seek an end to AIDS, we need to expand generic competition.

Obama administration plans for the Trans-Pacific FTA could make this more difficult. The agreement would require all member countries to change their laws on drug patents to some of the most aggressive standards the world has seen. These include substantive and procedural rules that facilitate patent abuse and profiteering by the big pharmaceutical companies.

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Ambitious U.S. plans for the Trans-Pacific FTA would eventually apply the agreement to the entire Asia-Pacific region, including critical sources of generic medicines supply such as India. Global cost reductions and expanding treatment access depend in no small part on global economies of scale for generics. The Trans-Pacific FTA directly threatens this.

The impetus for these proposed trade rules is the political and economic power of the patent-based pharmaceutical industry. It is important to remember that U.S. federal grants facilitated the invention of some of these drugs. The promise of an "AIDS-free generation" is beautiful. Getting there will require standing up to Big Pharma, promoting competition, and expanding access to the medicines we need to end AIDS.

Before TPP becomes law, it must be voted into law by a Congress. Ordinarily, when Congress considers legislation it can vote to amend portions of bills. However, President Obama has expressed his intention to request that Congress commit to only voting for or against TPP with no amendments under a procedure called Fast Track Authority. This would prevent members of Congress from introducing amendments to ensure that TPP will not threaten the lives of people with HIV/AIDS.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Call and email your Senators and Representative (you can find their names and contact info at <http://tradejustice.net/leg>). Urge them to publicly demand full public release of the TPP negotiating texts and to publicly express their commitment to vote against TPP Fast Track Authority.

MORE INFO:

TradeJustice NY Metro (718) 218-4523 * info@tradejustice.net * <http://tradejustice.net/meds>

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