



Representative Towns: Oppose Free Trade Agreements That Deny Access to AIDS Drugs and Other Life-Saving Medicines!

In 2005, Representative Ed Towns was one of one 15 Democrats in the nation to break party rants and vote for the US-Central America-Dominican Republic Free trade Agreement which included "intellectual property" rules that limit access to generic drugs, placing life-saving medications out of reach for many poor people in Central American and the DR while protecting the profits of multinational pharmaceutical giants like Pfizer. Proving that he hadn't learned from his mistake, he voted for the Peru Free Trade Agreement in 2007, which contains similar intellectual property rules. In Peru, nearly 50% of Peruvians have no public nor private health insurance. Pharmaceutical spending is a large burden on providing health coverage as it comprises one-quarter of public health expenditures and 44% of household spending on health.

President Obama is now sending trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea that contain similar intellectual property rules to be voted on in Congress and Representative Towns has remained silent on how he intends, to vote, which many interpret as a sign that she intends to place corporate profits over human lives and vote for the agreements.

- The FTAs extend the patent monopoly on medicines, protecting brand name pharmaceuticals from generic competition.
- The FTAs grant extended periods of data exclusivity to pharmaceutical companies, restricting the ability of generic manufacturers to have their drugs approved for sale.
- The FTAs impose limits on access to medications that force countries to trade away protections to public health established by World Trade Organization agreements
- An Oxfam study evaluating access to medicines in Jordan after their 2001 FTA with the U.S. found that drug prices had increased an average of 20% and that generic competition had been delayed on 79% of medicines.
- In general, four to five people can be treated for HIV utilizing affordable generic medicines for every one person treated with brand-name pharmaceuticals.
- In Colombia, 45% of the population lacks adequate access to the medicines they need.

Pharma Blog » 2010 » May » 28 UN Report Slams Colombia Trade Deal Over Meds



By Ed Silverman // May 28th, 2010 // 7:30 am

The Free Trade Agreements being negotiated between the US and other nations has come in for some criticism by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), which is a group body of independent experts that is charged with monitoring implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by participating nations. And in a new report, the CESCR notes that the intellectual property obligations included in the Free Trade Agreement between the US and Colombia may hurt access to medicines and recommends a revision of the IP provisions.

“The Committee is concerned that bilateral and multilateral trade agreements signed by (Colombia) may affect the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular of disadvantaged and marginalized groups, such as indigenous and afro-colombian peoples and persons living in rural areas. The committee is also concerned that the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed between (Colombia) and the US contains provisions on intellectual property that may result in increase of prices of medicines and negatively impact on the enjoyment of the right to health, in particular of those with low income.”

“The committee recommends that (Colombia) take effective measures to ensure that economic, social and cultural rights are taken into account in all free trade agreements and bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, and develop effective policies to protect the rights of the population, in particular of the marginalized and disadvantaged groups, against the negative impact of such agreements. In this regard, the committee recommends that (Colombia) consider revising the intellectual property provisions of the Free Trade Agreement signed with the US, in order to ensure protection against the increase of the price of medicines, in particular for those with low income.”

Source: <http://www.pharmalot.com/2010/05/un-committee-slams-colombia-trade-deal-over-meds/>

What You Can Do:

- * Call, write, fax, and email Representative Towns and urge him to protect access to life-saving medications and to vote NO on the Panama, Colombia, and South Korea Free Trade Agreements: Write to The Honorable Edolphus Towns, 2232 Rayburn HOB Washington, DC 20515. Phone: (202) 225-5936 Fax: (202) 225-1018 To email him, use the webform at <https://towns.house.gov/contact-me/email-me>.
- * Contact your Senators, President Obama, and your Representative and urge them to vote against the trade agreements. Find their names and contact information at <http://contactingthecongress.org> or call (718) 218-4523.

* Learn more and volunteer to stop the passage of these deadly trade agreements!
For details email info@tradejustice.net or call (718) 218-4523.

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