



# IBEW® FACT SHEET

## TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY (Fast Track)

**Trade Promotion Authority** (TPA or Fast Track) gives the U.S. president authority to enter into trade agreements with limited congressional oversight.<sup>1</sup> Trade Promotion Authority can only be granted by Congress.<sup>2</sup> By giving TPA to the president, Congress relinquishes its constitutional authority to review and amend trade deals. Congress may only vote "yes" or "no" on the agreement and may not send the agreement back to the executive branch with suggestions for improvement.

### *How does TPA impact trade agreements?*

Trade Promotion Authority forces Congress to make a yes or no decision on a lengthy, complicated agreement without having the proper time to review it. Congress has never defeated a trade deal under TPA procedures. By granting TPA, Congress sends a signal to the executive branch that it is free to negotiate anything without fear of disapproval. Trade Promotion Authority is not necessary to negotiate trade agreements, and many agreements have been made without it.

### *Why does this issue matter now more than ever?*

The administration is conducting negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership in secret. Therefore, the labor community and others representing workers' rights have not had a meaningful seat at the negotiating table. The administration has not shared with the labor community the Trans-Pacific Partnership text relating to worker health and safety protections, bargaining power, or the outsourcing of jobs.

Text that has been leaked points to the content of Trans-Pacific Partnership being similar to that of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which resulted in more than 700,000 lost jobs, and the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS), which cost 60,000 U.S. jobs in the first 2 years after it was signed.<sup>3</sup>

What makes the Trans-Pacific Partnership even more troubling than NAFTA or KORUS is that it is being drafted as a living agreement, giving new countries the ability to sign

on at any point down the road. The Trans-Pacific Partnership would be the largest trade agreement in history, covering 792 million people and 40% of the world economy.<sup>4</sup> An agreement of this size must be done right: Weak labor protections or incentives to outsource U.S. jobs must be prevented from the outset.

### *What can I do to stop TPA?*

Congress serves as an important backstop for protecting U.S. workers and jobs from damaging trade deals. The IBEW believes it is essential that Congress remains active in setting U.S. trade policy. Therefore, we respectfully ask that you do not support efforts to give the president TPA.

For more information, please contact the Political/Legislative Affairs Department at (202) 728-6046.

<sup>1</sup> See William H. Cooper, "Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) and the Role of Congress in Trade Policy," Congressional Research Service, January 13, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Robert E. Scott, "No Jobs From Trade Pacts," Economic Policy Institute, July 18, 2013, <http://www.epi.org/publication/trade-pacts-korus-trans-pacific-partnership>

<sup>4</sup> Robert Reich, "Why the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement Is a Pending Disaster," January 5, 2015, <http://robertreich.org/post/107257859130>