

Fast Track Derailed? House Deals Blow to Corporate-Friendly Trade Agenda

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Though it wasn't the resounding rejection progressives had hoped for, the U.S. House of Representatives on Friday dealt a serious blow to President Barack Obama's corporate-backed trade agenda, while erecting a major stumbling block for proponents of Fast Track, or trade promotion authority.

After a tense showdown and multiple votes in the chamber, a final decision on Fast Track was ultimately deferred, affording a delay that critics say could further scuttle the trade authority.

"Today's votes to stall Fast Track and TPP are a major win for anyone who cares about climate change," [said](#) 350.org executive director May Boeve. "This disastrous deal would extend the world's dependence on fracked gas, forbid our negotiators from ever using trade agreements in the fight against global warming, and make it easier for big polluters to burn carbon while suing anyone who gets in the way."

She continued: "That message clearly broke through today, as House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi got up, bucked enormous pressure, and rallied against the deal, specifically citing concerns about its impact on climate change. Today was a big win, but the thousands of climate activists across the country who stood up and linked arms with fellow progressives to get us here won't rest until Fast Track and TPP are dead for good."

A bill on Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), which would provide aid to workers displaced because of so-called "free trade" agreements, had been packaged with Fast Track

authority, and a vote against either doomed the total package. Legislators opposed to Fast Track sought to derail the entire package by voting against TAA.

And derail it they did, voting [126-302](#) against TAA.

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–Senator Bernie Sanders

Moments later, the chamber did pass a stand-alone version of Fast Track. But, as the *New York Times* [explains](#), because the [Senate version](#) linked TAA and Fast Track, the House vote “would force the Senate to take up a trade bill all over again. And without trade adjustment assistance alongside it, passing trade promotion authority in the Senate would be highly doubtful.”

Instead, the House will reportedly take up TAA again next week.

Still, progressives viewed Friday’s deferral of a final decision as a victory even as they cautioned against becoming complacent.

“I applaud the House of Representatives for the vote today,” [said](#) Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) in a statement after the vote. “While the fight will no doubt continue, today’s vote is a victory for America’s working people and for the environment. It is clearly a defeat for corporate America, which has outsourced millions of decent-paying jobs and wants to continue doing just that.”

Erich Pica of Friends of the Earth [added](#): “Today’s move to delay final decision on the trade package represents a significant victory in the fight to ensure that toxic trade

agreements like the TPP do not get bulldozed through Congress.” But he noted the victory “is not decisive. Friends of the Earth and others will remain vigilant to ensure that future efforts to pass Fast Track and climate-destroying trade agreements are defeated.”

As Lori Wallach of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch [pointed out](#) after the vote, “Passing trade bills opposed by a majority of Americans does not get easier with delay because the more time people have to understand what’s at stake, the angrier they get and the more they demand that their congressional representatives represent their will.”

This story is developing. Follow ongoing reaction to the votes, and their implications, on Twitter:

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