

National Farmers Union -- 2007 Special Order of Business

Trade

WHEREAS, Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) or “Fast Track” expires on June 30, 2007. Recent trade agreements, such as NAFTA and CAFTA, negotiated under Fast Track have been destructive and intensely unpopular with family farmers, ranchers and working families across the country; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Constitution grants Congress the exclusive authority to “regulate Commerce with foreign nations” and the structure of Fast Track destroys this vital check and balance, by only permitting an up-or-down vote on an agreement after it has been negotiated, signed and entered into; and

WHEREAS, the current administration has used rural America as bait to help promote a trade policy that has decimated our nation’s agriculture trade surplus in the last several years. Each trade agreement since the early 1990’s has resulted in opening our borders to cheaper, lower- quality imported food, without regard to how it is produced or who produces it; and

WHEREAS, Fast Track approved trade agreements, negotiated under World Trade Organization (WTO) parameters, and bilateral agreements like NAFTA, have resulted in massive growth of the U.S. trade deficit, resulting in a nearly \$800 billion deficit which at six percent of our nation’s GNP is now slowing U.S. economic growth and threatening global economic stability; resulted in the loss of three million manufacturing jobs, increased offshoring of high tech and service sector jobs and downward pressure on U.S. wages, decimating off-farm employment opportunities in rural America and gutting the tax base on which our families schools, hospitals and other essential services rely; and

WHEREAS, U.S. trade negotiators have demonstrated no restraint in trading away the interests of U.S. farmers and ranchers at the current Doha Round World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations. American farmers and ranchers are being forced to compete with imported food products that are often of lower-quality and less expensive to produce. Fast Track-enabled trade agreements require the U.S. to import food produced under horrific labor conditions using pesticides banned here while U.S. producers comply with high labor standards, environmental standards and health standards that far exceed our global competitors’ standards.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, National Farmers Union strongly opposes further grants of Fast Track-Trade Promotion Authority and calls upon the 110th Congress to resist bringing legislation to grant President Bush further Fast Track authority, to the floor of the U.S. Senate or House of Representatives. There is no acceptable version of Fast Track. An entirely new mechanism for Congress to authorize trade negotiations to ensure Congress can exercise its constitutional authority to set the terms of trade is needed in order to prioritize the interests of Americans and the future of our communities in today’s era of increasing globalization. The new mechanism should include:

- A set criteria created by Congress to establish with which countries it is in our national interest to negotiate new agreements;
- Mandatory and binding objectives that establish what must be included in future trade agreements and what cannot be included in any U.S. trade agreement;
- A mechanism for Congress to certify that the mandatory objectives have been met and that thus an agreement is ready for congressional consideration under expedited procedures;
- A requirement for Congress to vote on and approve a trade agreement’s contents before it can be signed and entered into by the Executive Branch;
- Increased oversight throughout the process and increased transparency of negotiators’ progress for congressional committees, state legislative officials and the public at large;
- Regular review and oversight of previous agreements, to ensure they serve the national interest, with remedial actions authorized for agreements requiring modification.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, NFU calls upon the Administration and U.S. trade negotiators to immediately abandon efforts to conclude the Doha Round agreement at the WTO, which will only devastate American agriculture and accelerate the race to the bottom for commodity prices. Future trade agreements must be designed to promote rural livelihoods by ensuring fair market returns for producers and production of safe, quality food for consumers. Thus, future trade agreements must not be limited to regulating domestic support levels, export subsidies and market access. Rather, every future trade agreement must address differences in labor standards, environmental standards, health standards and the trade-distorting effect of currency manipulation and cartelization of agriculture markets. No such agreement should combine blue and amber boxes that would further restrict individual sovereignty rights. The number one priority of future trade agreements must be to provide farmers and ranchers across the globe an opportunity to receive a fair price for their commodities.