



Republicans to Obama: We Will Give You Trade Promotion Authority

The Democrats are out, the Republicans are in, and Trade Promotion Authority for the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) and the TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) is just around the corner.

With the Republicans solidifying their hold over the House and picking up seven additional seats in the Senate for the majority, pundits in the media have already labeled President Obama a lame-duck president with little to no hope of getting landmark legislation through Congress. However, in his first post-election press conference, an optimistic Obama congratulated Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), the expected new Senate majority leader, saying that he was “eager to work with the new Congress to make the next two years as productive as possible.”



According to [U.S. News & World Report](#), “Obama also made reference to trade agreements Wednesday in his own post-election press conference, saying it was one area in which Democrats have a ‘real opportunity’ [to] cooperate with Republicans.”

Of the election results, conservative radio talk-show host Rush Limbaugh declared, “The Republican Party was not elected to sit down and work together with the Democrats. The Republican Party was not elected to slow down the speed the country is headed to the cliff and go over it slowly.”

“They were elected to stop the policies of Barack Obama and the Democrat Party,” Limbaugh asserted. Unfortunately, however, Republicans are making it clear that they intend on working together with Democrats and the president to get things done, particularly Obama’s free trade agenda.

“I’ve got a lot of members who believe that international trade agreements are a winner for America and the president and I discussed that right before I came over here,” said Senator McConnell, who among other Republicans, shares Obama’s vision about the “trade” partnerships. “I think he’s interested in moving forward. I said, ‘Send us trade agreements; we’re anxious to look at them.’”

Even Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) has [voiced his support for the trade agreements](#), encouraging the president to “prioritize” passage of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Speaking at the Center for the National Interest dinner in New York City on October 23, Senator Paul said:

Our national power is a function of the national economy. During the Reagan renaissance, our strength in the world reflected our successful economy.

Low growth, high unemployment, and big deficits have undercut our influence in the world.



Written by [Christian Gomez](#) on November 10, 2014

Americans have suffered real consequences from a weak economy.

President George W. Bush understood that part of the projection of American power is the exporting of American goods and culture. His administration successfully brokered fourteen new free trade agreements and negotiated three others that are the only new free trade agreements approved since President Obama took office. Instead of just talking about a so-called “pivot to Asia,” *the Obama administration should prioritize negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership by year’s end.* [Emphasis added.]

Both the TPP and the TTIP are unprecedented regional agreements purported to create millions of new jobs and expand the U.S. economy via greater integration with the Asia-Pacific rim nations (TPP) and with the European Union (TTIP) at the expense of American sovereignty. Congressman Alan Grayson (D-Fla.), one of the few members of Congress given limited access to the TPP negotiation documents, told the [Huffington Post](#), “Having seen what I’ve seen, I would characterize this as a gross abrogation of American sovereignty.”

History of “Fast Track”/Trade Promotion Authority

The modern free trade agenda stems back to the 1930s. In 1933, then newly inaugurated President Franklin Delano Roosevelt first requested the authority from Congress allowing the executive branch to enter into trade agreements with foreign nations in order to lower trade tariffs — a power that had previously been exercised solely by Congress in accordance with the Constitution.

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the Constitution grants Congress the power “to regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes.” In 1934, Congress passed and FDR signed the Reciprocal Trade Agreement Act (RTAA), granting the president such authority.

“Signed into law on June 12, 1934, the RTAA represented a fundamental shift in U.S. trade policy,” explains the [Office of the Historian](#) on the U.S. Department of State’s website. The State Department further elaborates, “The Constitution gives Congress the right to regulate foreign commerce and establish tariff rates. Under the RTAA, Congress granted the president the right — on a temporary basis, subject to renewal after three years.”

According to the [Congressional Research Service](#), “Congress renewed presidential reciprocal trade authority eleven times until 1962 through trade agreement extension acts.” RTAA was then replaced by the passage of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, under which according to the CRS:

Congress granted the President authority for five years to negotiate the reduction or elimination of tariffs and expanded its role in the process by requiring the President to submit for congressional review a copy of each concluded agreement and a presidential statement explaining why the agreement was concluded.

Congress did not renew the Trade Expansion Act when it expired in 1967; instead, it debated for another seven years until it passed the Trade Act of 1974, which gave the president authority to negotiate trade agreements and created “fast track authority” for their passage in Congress.

Ever since 1974, fast track authority has given trade agreements expedited treatment, limiting debate and prohibiting amendments thereto. At the time it was felt that foreign nations would not want to enter trade negotiations with the United States if they would be subject to protracted debate and amendments by Congress after the president had already signed them, hence the reasoning behind the creation of fast track authority.



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Fast track authority eventually expired on April 16, 1994, and was not reauthorized by Congress until the passage of the Bipartisan Trade Promotion Authority Act (BPTAA) of 2002. BPTAA reinstated fast track authority renamed as “trade promotion authority” (TPA), which expired in 2007. In 2012, President Obama requested renewal of TPA/fast track authority to complete negotiations for the TPP and TTIP.

Conservative Opposition

Historically, conservative Republicans have been wary of these so-called free trade agreements. In 1949, when the 81st Congress debated approving extension of RTAA, as requested by President Harry Truman, Senator George “Molly” Malone (R-Nev.) passionately [led the charge against its renewal](#), shouting across the Senate floor: “We are importing unemployment!”

Malone’s good friend and colleague Senator Robert Taft (R-Ohio) agreed. “The issue is whether we believe in free trade or we don’t,” Taft said. “I do not believe in free trade. I agree that the whole world would be better off on the average. But the U.S. would be worse off. We would average down, as the others average up.”

This modern free trade agenda is not “free trade” in the classical Adam Smith sense of the term, whereby merchants engage in commerce with individuals and other merchants across foreign borders and seas without the interference of government. Instead, what is today called “free trade” is nothing more than trade determined by the state: trade that is designed to break down borders and erode sovereignty in order to foster world government.

On page 16 of his book [Mainline](#), Senator Malone writes: “The claims of its [free trade’s] early opponents, that the ultimate purpose was world government, have not diminished. On the contrary, the conviction has increased, as has the evidence adduced in its support.” Malone further elaborates:

The executive branch of the United States Government, together with the ideological advocates of a global theory, is meanwhile countenancing a gigantic economic mechanism which is designed to bring into being a completely socialist political and economic government of the world.

The program is being followed not by one major political party but by both. Its theory is that peace can be achieved, and that universal prosperity can be brought forth, by abandoning the recently-acquired sovereignty of nationhood and amalgamating all political authorities into one happy and carefree whole. To that theory are being subordinated the normal, natural interests of the citizens of these United States.

Our Nation’s Constitution, our Bill of Rights — those historic ten Amendments which set forth the great unstoppable reservoir of ultimate sovereignty which is reserved to our States and to our people — are being sacrificed, and to a dream-world presumptively governed by “universal law.”

Senator Malone’s words resonate today as congressional Republicans work toward giving a Democratic president the trade promotion authority necessary for expediting America’s subordination to world government via the TPP and TTIP “trade” agreements.



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