



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on March 10, 2015

Sen. Wyden Is Key Democrat in TPP-TPA Fast Track Trade Fight

Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore., shown), the ranking member on the Senate Finance Committee, is getting pressure from both liberals and conservatives to oppose Fast Track, while crony corporate interests and the Obama administration step up their lobbying squeeze to pass the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement. Wyden, who has voted for trade agreements in the past, is viewed as the key arbiter in Congress currently holding up votes on the TPP, as well as Trade Promotion Authority (TPA, otherwise known as “Fast Track”).



“Oh, he’s important,” Senator Jon Tester (D-Mont.), the chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, [told the New York Times](#) regarding Wyden. “He is the most important person in the caucus on this issue.”

“Mr. Obama’s ambitious trade agenda — once seen as the best chance for bipartisan accomplishment in an otherwise rived Congress — appears to rest,” noted the same March 4 *Times* article, “on the narrow, somewhat wobbly shoulders of Mr. Wyden, a position acknowledged by both parties and the White House with some trepidation.”

The [still-secret](#) Trans-Pacific Partnership currently involves 12 nations — Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States, and Vietnam. But, as we [reported](#) as far back as 2013, the TPP “is really intended as an interim arrangement, on the road to an expanded Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FTAAP) that would include all 21 nations of the grouping known as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). That includes China and Russia.”

“On the heels of that deal,” notes the *Times* story cited above, “Mr. Obama would like to negotiate a second multilateral trade accord with Europe.” That is a reference to the [Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership \(TTIP\)](#), the other massive, secret agreement that threatens our Constitution, our sovereignty, our prosperity, and our liberty (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

“But before any of that can happen,” reports the *Times*, “the White House, its trading partners and most congressional leaders say Congress must pass so-called trade promotion authority, which would let Mr. Obama reach those agreements knowing that Congress can approve or reject them — but cannot amend them.”

The *New York Times*, like most of the rest of the establishment media, favors the TPP, TTIP and every other so-called “free trade” agreement, no matter how intrusive or destructive it may be to our constitutional system and national independence. Likewise, it sees little danger from the TPA/Fast Track process. However, once the TPA is explained, most Americans can readily see that it is a stacked deck that cannot be conducive to honest, representative, transparent government. As we explained in a recent article, [“How to Pass Disastrous Trade Agreements”](#):



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Under TPA fast track rules, the executive branch would be allowed to work out all the details of the trade deals — in secret, on subjects as varied as energy, global warming, foreign aid, immigration, and homeland security, NATO/UN “peacekeeping,” and Internet control — before the deals would be sent to Congress for passage. If we go by past TPA experience, the House and Senate would then each be required to vote on the agreements within 15 days after being reported out of committee. Only 20 hours of debate would be allowed in each House. Twenty hours — for a detailed, complex document that may be hundreds or thousands of pages long, written in legalese! And no deletions or amendments are permitted. In the Senate, no filibuster of objectionable text is allowed. All while the corporations that actually wrote the bill work out under-the-table agreements with any congressman who proves amenable. Passage of TPA virtually ensures passage of TPP and TTIP.

Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), who chairs of the Senate Finance Committee, the panel tasked with ultimately reporting a TPA bill, is one of the top Republican leaders who have been leading the effort to pass the TPP-TTIP “ObamaTrade” agenda.

Other top [GOP leaders who are carrying TPP-TTIP-TPA water](#) for the Obama White House include Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.)

According to a March 4 report in [Agri-Pulse](#), Sen. Hatch has been trying for weeks but “doesn’t think he can move a TPA bill until after the Easter recess, which would push the legislation back until the Senate reconvenes on the 13th of April. He said he has been unable to reach an agreement with committee ranking member Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.”

But is Wyden a reliable hope for opponents of TPP and TTIP, or is he merely posturing in order to placate passionate constituents? The Oregon Democrat, who is facing re-election next year, knows that this issue could be a pivotal one in his political career, so he is trying to play both sides of the aisle. The *Times* and other media outlets are playing up the “shut-off valve” feature that Wyden is demanding be put into any TPA bill.

“From his position in the driver’s seat,” reported the *Times*, “Mr. Wyden is putting demands on the fast-track bill that Republicans are not sure they can accept — most important, a shut-off valve that Congress could turn if the details of the Pacific or European accords did not live up to their promise.”

Both the Obama administration and GOP leaders are voicing opposition to Wyden’s concept, but that could change and acceptance of the shut-off valve could be used to pass TPA, with the knowledge that the congressional leadership could stop it from ever being invoked to threaten the TPP or TTIP. That way Wyden and other vulnerable senators and representatives would have the protective cover of having voted only for a “safe” TPA, and when the shut-off valve fails to work they could feign to be as angry and perplexed as everyone else.

Photo of Sen. Ron Wyden: AP Images

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