



# Seattle City Council

February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015

The Honorable Adam Smith  
2264 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Smith:

On March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015 the City Council passed Resolution 31573, expressing our opposition to Trade Promotion Authority (“Fast Track”) for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and our concerns over then-draft elements of the TPP. In the resolution, we stated: “The Seattle City Council strongly supports fair trade practices and agreements that protect American jobs, protect workers, protect the environment, include enforceable labor and environmental standards, improve the quality of life in all signatory countries, maintain the integrity and sovereignty of our judicial system, and do not give multinational corporations excessive power to undermine national and local governmental authority to create reasonable rules and regulations.” Further, we noted that if these principles were not met, we would urge our Congressional delegation to reject the TPP. Now that the full text of the deal is publicly available and coming before you for a vote, we are following up to urge you to reject the TPP and encourage you to renegotiate a truly fair trade agreement.

Seattle has adopted some of the most progressive labor and environmental standards in the country, and we fear the TPP, if approved, could significantly undermine these advances. The Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions of the TPP set up an international, quasi-judicial system that allows multinational corporations to challenge state and local laws and demand damages for lost profits. This system threatens laws designed to protect the public interest and our planet. Our experience with NAFTA and other trade agreements, including ISDS cases from Canada, where provincial laws and local decisions were successfully challenged, indicates that TPP continues the threat to state and local decision-making.

As the City of Seattle takes steps towards reaching our goal of being carbon neutral by 2050, the TPP weakens conservation standards set in previous trade agreements and encourages our global dependence on fossil fuels. Right now, the ISDS process set up through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is being used by Trans-Canada to sue the United States government for \$15 billion over our rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline. The ISDS tribunals established through previous trade agreements have enabled more than 600 challenges to more than 100 governments around the world, including Quebec’s moratorium on fracking, Germany’s plans to phase-out nuclear energy, and a decision to reject a new mining project in Nova Scotia.

We also fear ISDS could jeopardize Seattle’s recent advancements to raise labor standards for workers in our city, such as our newly increased minimum wage or requirements that employers provide paid sick and safe leave to their employees. In Vietnam, one of the 12 countries included in the TPP, the minimum wage is 56 cents an hour, a full \$10 less than the lowest paid hourly wage worker in Seattle today. Further, we know that free trade acts have hurt the United States’ workers in the past, and the TPP looks to continue that harmful legacy. For example, according to the Economic Policy Institute, NAFTA has led to 680,000

American jobs being lost domestically. In addition, the Labor Advisory Committee on Trade, in its report on the TPP, said that the calculations made by the Department of Commerce estimate that "the TPP will cost, at a minimum, 330,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector." By not strengthening international labor standards and failing to prevent currency manipulation, the TPP will make it even easier to ship American jobs overseas. Additionally, the current TPP text requires the U.S. government to treat TPP firms the same as domestic firms for purchasing decisions, even when "Buy American" or, in our state, "Buy Washington" rules apply.

The TPP also threatens Seattle residents' access to affordable medicine, which is why organizations such as Doctors Without Borders and the Alliance for Retired Americans oppose it. The TPP would extend pharmaceutical patents longer and into all countries involved, restricting access to cheaper lifesaving medicine. Crucially, TPP could also prevent Medicaid and Medicare from providing drug discounts to their low income patients, which runs counter to our country's efforts to lower the cost of health care.

The Seattle City Council strongly supports international fair trade practices and agreements that foster economic growth and high standards for labor, our environment, and public health. However, we do not support the Trans-Pacific Partnership and urge you to vote against it when it comes before the United States Senate for a vote.

Thank you for your consideration. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you next time you are back in Western Washington.

Sincerely,

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Council President Bruce Harrell

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Councilmember Sally Bagsaw

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Councilmember Mike O'Brien

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Councilmember Lisa Herbold

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Councilmember M. Lorena González

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Councilmember Debora Juarez

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Councilmember Kshama Sawant

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Councilmember Rob Johnson