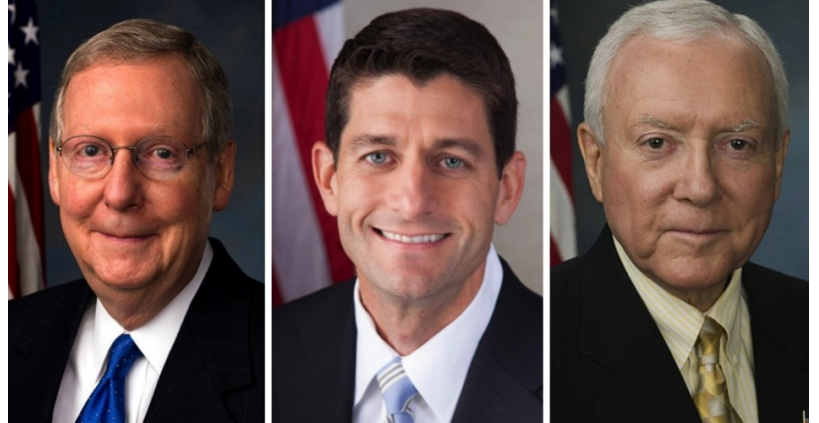




Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on January 19, 2015

GOP Leaders Set to Enable “ObamaTrade” With Fast Track for President

A vote on [Trade Promotion Authority](#) (TPA, better known as “Fast Track”) is likely to come up in March as Senator Mitch McConnell (left, R-Ky.), Representative Paul Ryan (center, R-Wis.), Senator Orrin Hatch (right, R-Utah), and other GOP leaders line up Republican votes to push for Obama’s U.S.-Atlantic-Pacific merger pacts. “The first thing we ought to do is pass trade promotion authority,” new House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Paul Ryan said at a committee hearing on the U.S. economy, according to a January 14 report on [politico.com](#). Ryan argued that TPA would allow the White House to bring back the best deal in the ongoing international negotiations.



“The first window for passing trade promotion authority legislation will likely be in March, according to a senior House GOP aide, who said busy floor and committee schedules will likely prevent the bill from coming up in February,” *Politico* reported.

“The aide predicted that the House Ways and Means Committee would report out a clean TPA bill, with no other trade legislation attached,” *Politico* continued. “In one scenario, the Senate could pass all the other pending trade legislation, such as the Generalized System of Preferences, together in a package, while the House passes TPA. Then, each chamber in turn would pass the legislation from the other, the aide said.”

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Senator Orrin Hatch, now president pro tem of the Senate, as well as chairman of the powerful Senate Finance Committee, is keen to help new Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell deliver Fast Track power to President Obama. *Congressional Quarterly* reported on January 6 that a Finance Committee aide “said Hatch plans to move forward on a revival of trade promotion authority, calling the return of fast track authority to negotiate trade deals a ‘top priority’ in the new Congress.” This is not surprising, since Hatch has been a staunch supporter of “free trade” deals for decades, through both Republican and Democrat administrations. Last year, as ranking minority member on the Senate Finance Committee, he joined with then-chairman Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.) to introduce the fast track TPA bill authored by House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (R-Mich.), H.R. 3830, which died in committee.

As *The New American* reported in November and December (see [here](#) and [here](#)) the Republican leadership in the House and Senate began a renewed team-up with President Obama right after the November elections to expedite passage of a Trade Promotion Authority bill in the new Congress.



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Opposition on Both Right and Left

Opposition is forming from both the Right and the Left as Senate and House Republican leaders team up with President Obama to push TPA to facilitate passage of the [Trans-Pacific Partnership](#) (TPP) and the [Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership](#) (TTIP).

The two mammoth agreements, which are being negotiated in secret — without even allowing members of Congress access to the documents — have taken a back seat over the past two years to many other issues, with the major media ignoring the ways the agreements profoundly threaten our individual rights, our national sovereignty, and our political and economic systems. What little coverage the “mainstream” corporate media have devoted to the TTIP and TPP has been largely to regurgitate as fact the “free trade” talking points of the administration and its Wall Street allies, which promise endless prosperity and “jobs, jobs, jobs,” when the agreements are passed.

Now, however, the so-called trade agreements are moving to the center stage, which has galvanized opposition across the political spectrum — liberal Democrats, conservative Republicans, Tea Partiers, constitutionalists, and libertarians — as details of agreements have leaked out and more and more Americans become aware of the dangers inherent both in the documents themselves, as well as in the furtive process by which they are being crafted. The TPP is more advanced in negotiations than the TTIP, so it is the one most likely to be voted on first.

A group of conservative leaders held a press conference on January 13 at the U.S. Capitol to urge Congress to reject granting President Obama trade promotion authority for the Trans-Pacific Partnership Treaty. Americans for Limited Government President Richard Manning called on Congress to “not cede any additional authority to a President who has spent the past six years shredding the constitutional separation of powers.”

Sandy Rios, director of government affairs for the American Family Association, emphasized the traditional role the United States has played in using its economic might to expand freedom around the world, saying, “Wisdom dictates that America must use all means at its disposal to resist religious persecution anywhere it is found through the power of our God-given treasure and resources. It is for this reason that American Family Association opposes passage of fast track legislation that negates their ability to change the Trans-Pacific Partnership to end religious oppression in Vietnam, Brunei and Malaysia.”

Niger Innis, executive director of TheTeaParty.net, called ceding additional legislative powers to the Executive Branch “a monumental failure of Congressional Republicans to understand the nature of the President’s fundamental transformation of America.”

President Obama, Innis said, “has shown outright contempt for the separation of powers,” and “there can be no worse lesson for the White House than for this Congress to voluntarily cede authority to it.”

Also participating in the news conference were Frank Gaffney, president and founder of the Center for Security Policy, and Glyn Wright, executive director of the Eagle Forum, who read remarks from the organization’s founder, Phyllis Schlafly. These and other leaders signed a [letter](#) “To the Members of the 114th Congress” urging them “to publicly oppose granting President Obama Fast Track Authority on the TransPacific Partnership or any other Treaty in the next two years.”

One hundred fifty-one House Democrats led by Representatives Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) and George Miller (D-Calf.) have sent President Obama a letter announcing that “we will oppose ‘Fast Track’ Trade Promotion Authority or any other mechanism delegating Congress’ constitutional authority over trade



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policy that continues to exclude us from having a meaningful role in the formative stages of trade agreements and throughout negotiating and approval processes.”

Echoing the constitutional arguments we have made repeatedly in *The New American*, the Democratic lawmakers’ letter correctly points out: “Congress, not the Executive Branch, must determine when an agreement meets the objectives Congress sets in the exercise of its Article 1-8 exclusive constitutional authority to set the terms of trade. For instance, an agreement that does not specifically meet congressional negotiating objectives must not receive preferential consideration in Congress.”

Under TPA “Fast Track” rules, the House and Senate would each be required to vote on the Trans-Pacific Partnership within 15 days after it is reported out of committee. Only 20 hours of debate are allowed in each House — for a detailed, complex document that may be thousands of pages long — and no deletions or amendments are permitted. In the Senate, no filibuster of objectionable text is allowed.

Stacked Deck

Fast Track is a stacked deck. The proponents of the TPP and TTIP constitute a massive lobby of multinational corporations, international banks, state-owned enterprises, governments, and their high-powered law firms, public relations firms, and major media allies. As we have seen in previous Fast Track votes, the “free trade agenda” lobby is given a huge advantage, with advanced copies of the texts (which they have helped write) and expensive, sophisticated PR campaigns that are already rolling in advance and dramatically intensify as the congressional vote approaches. Opponents do not have the time or financial resources to match this kind of rigged game. On top of which, the White House, congressional leaders, and Wall Street lobbyists go all out in a no-holds-barred offensive with promises, bribes, and threats to get the simple majority of votes they need in each House.

McConnell Admits: TPA = “Enormous Grant of Power”

Many Republican defenders of TPA are insisting that Fast Track is no big thing to make a fuss over, and that in no way should it be considered a transfer of power to Obama. However, in a January 6 press conference, the Senate’s top Republican, Mitch McConnell, committed the sin of candor and acknowledged what all sensible observers already knew to be the fact: that TPA is “an enormous grant of power, obviously, from a Republican Congress to a Democratic president.”

“Yeah, we’re in active discussion on TPA, trade promotion authority,” McConnell told reporters. “It’s an enormous grant of power, obviously, from a Republican Congress to a Democratic president, but that’s how much we believe in trade as an important part of America’s economy.”

Republican leaders in Congress, even with their new majorities in both houses, seem incapable of mustering the resolve to challenge in any substantive way President Obama’s headlong race to socialize the economy of the United States and to dismantle the American constitutional system by executive fiat. But they are happily jumping on the White House bandwagon to pass the president’s TPA-TPP-TTIP “ObamaTrade” program.



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