

April 16, 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boehner  
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader, U.S. House of  
Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Reid, Speaker Boehner, and Leader Pelosi:

As organizations that represent Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities, we urge you to oppose “Fast Track” legislation, also known as Trade Promotion Authority (TPA).

We are very concerned about the unprecedented level of secrecy that negotiations have been conducted in. Leaked texts have shown that the Fast Tracking of sweeping trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) will have serious implications for AAPI workers and families.

AAPIs are involved in all parts of our nation’s economy and workforce—from small business owners to farmers, our community plays a diverse role in the labor force. A large share—65 percent—of the AAPI community is foreign born.

The TPP extends beyond traditional trade issues like tariffs and quotas, and will have very real consequences for our daily lives. It will not only lead to further offshoring of jobs, but undermine our food safety, internet freedom and access to affordable medicines.

Just three trade deals--the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), China into the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the U.S. – Korea Trade Agreement—have resulted in the loss of nearly 4 million U.S. jobs. States with large AAPI populations have been particularly hard hit. Additionally, AARP has warned that the TPP will increase prescription prices and place a number of Medicare and Medicaid programs at risk. Medicaid provides stable health coverage and services for 11% of Asian Americans and 14% of Pacific Islanders. In addition, over 14% of Asian seniors rely on Medicare and Medicaid for health coverage.

We are concerned that the TPP would also reward some countries in Asia that violently suppress civil, human and workers’ rights. For example, one of the countries that would benefit from TPP, Brunei, has adopted a new penal code, supposedly based on Sharia law, which threatens the rights of women, religious minorities as well as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

Previously Fast Tracked free trade agreements such as NAFTA have already demonstrated that this free trade model harms our communities by putting corporate profits over workers. This has

led to a global race to the bottom. NAFTA and subsequent pacts not only led to millions of American jobs being lost through offshoring, but also devastated farming communities in Latin America, exacerbated inequality and spurred economic migration to the US. The TPP will only worsen this race to the bottom.

Fast Tracking the TPP would mean that neither Congress nor the American people will be able to thoroughly debate the TPP or make amendments to make sure that the agreement protects AAPI communities here in the U.S. and abroad. Members of Congress should not give up their constitutional right and responsibility to make sure that trade policies represent the needs and priorities of their constituents. We urge you to stand with us in opposing Fast Track.

Sincerely,

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance Alameda Chapter

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance DC Chapter

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance Hawaii Chapter

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance Los Angeles Chapter

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance Michigan Chapter

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance Nevada Chapter

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance New York Chapter

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance New Jersey Chapter

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance Seattle Chapter

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance Texas Chapter

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations

Alliance of South Asian American Labor

BAYAN-USA

Boat People SOS

Boat People SOS-California

Boat People SOS-Orange County

Boat People SOS-Virginia

Chinese Progressive Association - San Francisco

Coalition for a Free and Democratic Vietnam

Con Dau Parishioners Association

DC Asian American and Pacific Islander Democratic Caucus

Filipino Advocates for Justice

Freedom for Vietnam

Hmong National Development, Inc.

Montagnard Dalat Christian Ministry, Inc

National Alliance for Filipino Concerns (NAFCON) - USA

National Asian Pacific American Student Coalition of the United States Student Association

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum

National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development

National Federation of Filipino American Associations

National Korean American Service & Education Consortium

National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance

Quangnam-Danang Association

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center  
The Center for Asian Pacific American Women  
University of Maryland Asian American Student Union  
Vietnamese American Community of Seattle & Snohomish-King County  
Vietnamese Community of Tacoma and Pierce County  
Vietnamese Senior Association of Tacoma and Pierce County  
Vietsoul Youth Organization  
Women for Human Rights in Vietnam (WFHR)