

...Labor hopes fast-track trade bills will be blocked

(From Page 1)

Campaign. "Many Democrats have come to recognize the agreements have not been good for American workers."

"We're kind of holding our breath right now," said Thea Lee, trade policy expert for the national AFL-CIO. For the first time in years, Lee senses that one or more of these treaties may fail to be ratified.

Plus, the president's ability to negotiate the treaties is up for debate. All the NAFTA-style agreements have been negotiated by presidents who were granted "fast-track" authority by Congress. Basically, Congress commits to vote trade treaties up or down without amendment two or three months after getting the text from the president.

"Fast-track abdicates Congress' constitutional responsibility to regulate foreign commerce," Weiss said, "and gives the executive branch the power to dictate the terms of trade policy."

Presidents have argued that they can't get trading partners to make concessions on complicated agreements like these if the agreements can later be modified by Congress. But in practice, "fast-track" has given presidents free rein to leave out binding commitments on workers' rights or environmental protections. NAFTA-style treaties contain hundreds of pages of guarantees for foreign investors and tariff-enforceable trademark, copyright and patent monopolies, but only the flimsiest pledges on workers' rights or the environment. Generally, the treaties say the countries agree to enforce their own labor and environmental laws, whatever they may be at a particular time. If they fail to do so, theoretically they would pay a fine to themselves to fund enforcement of the un-enforced laws.

The current fast-track authorization expires June 30. It would have to be renewed in order for President Bush to negotiate further treaties. But Weiss thinks it may not even get a vote.

New York Democrat Charles Rangel now chairs the House Ways and Means Committee, where trade bills originate. Rangel voted for about half the trade agreements, but voted against NAFTA, CAFTA, and fast-track in the past. On March 27, Rangel spelled out his approach to trade policy, saying future trade agreements must include enforceable commitments to internationally recognized labor standards. But it's not clear how Rangel will approach the already-negotiated treaties. Oregon Third District U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer also now serves on Ways and Means, and its Trade Subcommittee. Blumenauer has a history of support for NAFTA-style treaties, but voted against CAFTA and the 2006 treaty with Oman. If they pass the committee, trade-related bills go to the House floor, where House Speaker Nancy Pelosi will determine if they get a vote. Pelosi voted for four NAFTA-style treaties, but against fast-

track and the CAFTA and Oman treaties.

In the Senate, the bills must first go through the Finance Committee, which is now chaired by Montana Democrat Max Baucus. Baucus voted for NAFTA and every one of its follow-ups, but came out against CAFTA. Ron Wyden and Oregon Republican

Gordon Smith are also on Senate Finance. Smith has voted for every NAFTA-style treaty to come before Congress; Wyden voted for every one except Chile and Singapore. After the Finance Committee, trade bills must get a vote in the full Senate, where Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid holds sway. Reid has voted against

NAFTA and every subsequent trade treaty. So critics of the treaties will have multiple opportunities to stop them from passing this year.

Last month, the AFL-CIO Executive Council approved an all-out drive to stop President Bush's renew "fast-track" trade authority.

In Portland, Machinists District

Lodge 24 Business Representative Joe Kear says the Freightliner decision to shift production to Mexico didn't have to happen.

"We need to look at the consequences of these trade deals," Kear said. "The trade deals we have are specifically designed to move our jobs someplace else."

Fatal Fall Alert

Gravity Kills

In 3 years, 22 Oregon workers died in falls. Risk

increases greatly over age 35, and again over age 65.

Fall hazards are everywhere. Falls from ladders are #1.

Please observe the following safety tips.

Recommendations

- **Make sure ladder is in good condition, base and locks are secure. Set base 1/4 working length from wall, supported at top by both rails extending 3-4 ft above dismount level.**
- **Three-point rule: Get a firm grip with three of four limbs, especially in icy conditions.**
- **Beware losing your balance from the unexpected release of a weight you are carrying or pulling, or from overreaching.**

Fatal Stories, 2003-2005

LADDERS

Store ladder A female retail clerk fell from the sixth step of a step-ladder in a company storeroom, and died 5 days later. She sustained a fracture to the left knee and femur. The clerk was admitted to a local hospital, where she developed sepsis.

Icy lumber load A lumber yard worker was killed when he fell about 11 ft off a loaded semi-trailer. The worker placed an extension ladder against the load and climbed to the top to strap it down. Ice had formed on a layer of plastic covering the load, and the worker apparently slipped as he was stepping from the ladder.

Roof exit A school custodian died after falling about 12 ft from a ladder. He used a fully extended extension ladder to access a roof to retrieve balls. The spring-loaded locks were not set properly, which allowed the custodian to climb the ladder successfully, but the ladder collapsed when he put his weight on it to return to the ground.

ELEVATED LEDGE

Concrete tank A construction worker died after falling about 19 ft into a concrete tank. The worker was removing concrete from an underground water treatment tank that was being dismantled, and was chipping away the fastening strip from the top edge. He was either bending over or kneeling to perform this task, and apparently lost his balance when he stood up to move to the next section.

Conveyor belt A miner fell 12 ft onto a concrete floor from a crossbeam of an elevated conveyor at a sand and gravel operation, and died the next day. The miner and two coworkers were installing a new conveyor belt. The miner was standing on a crossbeam, pulling on a rope tied to the new belt. The rope unexpectedly came loose, causing him to fall.



Much more! See Oregon OSHA's readable manual *FALL PROTECTION FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY* and other resources online at www.croetweb.com

- **Avoid standing up from a kneeling position next to a ledge, where momentary dizziness can cause you to lose balance.**
- **Cover and guard holes securely.**

Hay trailer A rancher fell about 12 ft off a trailer onto his head, and died 2 weeks later. The rancher was feeding horses from the top of a trailer when the string broke on a bale of hay he picked up, sending him backward off the trailer. He walked a few hundred yards to his house, and went to the hospital. He was discharged 4 days later, refused physical therapy, and later died of a massive pulmonary embolism.

HOLE IN ROOF OR FLOOR

Skylight A roofer's helper died when he fell through a skylight to a concrete floor 35 ft below. The worker was assisting his father, a roofing contractor, repair water leaks on the flat roof of a commercial warehouse. Clearing up for the day, the worker was backing up with a torch hose when he stepped or tripped into the skylight.

Insulated hole A journeyman roofer died after falling through a covered hole 20 ft onto a concrete floor during a warehouse reroofing project. The roofers removed a fan and covered the hole with a square of insulation, unsecured and unmarked. Wearing sunglasses, the roofer walked across the roof, kicked loose the insulation over the hole, and fell through it.

Loading-hole gate A female fish processor was killed after falling 12 ft through a loading hole on a second-floor storage area. The opening was designed for use by a forklift: three sides closed by fixed guardrails, and the fourth with a removable gate of two 2x4 rails that sat in cradles. The rails were not pinned or blocked. As the processor leaned over the bottom rail of the gate to catch boxes being thrown up to her, the rail dislodged.

TRIPS AND OTHER FALLS

Trip fracture An 88-year-old pawnbroker tripped over a bag on the floor of his shop and fractured his hip. The victim died from complications in the hospital 4 days later.

OR - FACE
PLEASE POST

Oregon Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation

503-494-2502 www.ohsu.edu/croet/face

