

# New round of trade talks keep public in dark, but not lobbyists

## Oregon Democrats united in demand for transparency in Trans-Pacific Partnership

All six of Oregon's Congressional Democrats sent letters to the nation's highest-ranking trade official last month demanding greater transparency in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade negotiations. The TPP is poised to become the country's largest free trade agreement ever.

Despite having proposed text for some 26 separate chapters — affecting everything from jobs and the environment to consumer safety and banking regulations — U.S. negotiators have refused to tell the public what they've been proposing and have even limited Congressional access to TPP proposals.

"The majority of Congress is being kept in the dark as to the substance of the TPP negotiations, while representatives of U.S. corporations — like Halliburton, Chevron, PhRMA, Comcast and the Motion Picture Association of America — are being consulted and made privy to details of the agreement," said U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden in late May, as he introduced legislation requiring the U.S. trade representative to share TPP texts with Congress.

In a letter sent to U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Ron Kirk on June 25, Sens. Wyden and Jeff Merkley pointed out that TPP "will create binding policies on future Congresses in numerous areas where there is significant public interest, including policies related to labor, environment and natural resources, land use, food, agriculture and product standards, intellectual property rights, state-owned enterprises and government procurement policies, as well as financial, health care, energy, telecommunications and other service sector regulations." The letter asked "that the USTR provide the public with detailed information and consistent updates on what USTR is seeking in the TPP."

Wyden chairs the Senate Trade Subcommittee charged with overseeing U.S. trade policy, and until recently, had been barred from reviewing any TPP proposals. Even now, he can only access TPP documents on a "read and retain basis" — meaning in a private room without making copies, taking notes or sharing text with staff (who, themselves, have high-level security clearances). Meanwhile, hundreds of corporate lobbyists have been granted "cleared adviser" status that gives them online access to draft TPP texts at their leisure from anywhere in the country.

"Not allowing the public to comment on specific U.S. proposals for the TPP until after the multi-year negotia-

tions have concluded and the deal is signed is outrageously bad policy-making procedure," said Arthur Stamoulis, director of the labor-backed Oregon Fair Trade Campaign. "I'm proud that Oregon's Congressional delegation is leading the calls for transparency. The fact that approximately 600 corporate lobbyists have access to the TPP negotiating texts, while the public does not, frankly reeks of corruption. It's time for USTR to release the texts."

One-hundred-thirty-three members of the U.S. House, including Oregon Reps. Early Blumenauer, Suzanne Bonamici, Peter DeFazio, and Kurt Schrader, sent a letter to Kirk urging greater opportunities for public and Congressional oversight of the TPP. Organizational and constituent requests that GOP Rep. Greg Walden also add his name to the letter went unanswered.

The House letter points out precedents for transparency in trade negotiations, including that the World Trade Organization (WTO) regularly posts draft texts on its website and that the Bush Administration published draft text of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) back in 2001.

More than 42,000 Americans signed a TPP transparency petition that was delivered to U.S. negotiators during the 12th major round of TPP negotiations in May. The 13th major round of talks began this week in San Diego.



## Poker Run motorcycle winner

Larry Fisher of IBEW Local 280 holds the keys to his new 2012 Heritage Softail Classic Harley-Davidson motorcycle autographed by Willie G. Davidson, the grandson of Harley-Davidson co-founder William A. Davidson and the company's senior vice president and chief styling officer. Fisher, of Lebanon, Oregon, was the grand prize winner of the motorcycle raffle, which is the primary fundraising portion of the Motorcycle Poker Run and Chili Cook-off sponsored by Unions for Kids. This year marked the 10th anniversary of the event, which raised a record \$55,000 for Doernbecher Children's Hospital. Since its inception, the Poker Run has donated \$326,000 to Doernbecher. Handing over the keys to Fisher is Jamie Anderson, sales manager at Columbia Motorcycle in Vancouver, Wash. Columbia was this year's top contributor with a donation of \$3,000. Out of 297 riders, the winner of the Poker Run — with a high hand of four 5s — was Dan Poczynek of IBEW Local 48. The low-hand winner was a "wheel" (A, 2, 3, 4, 5), held by IBEW Local 48 member Eugene Kramer. Each received a cash prize. The Chili Cook-off champion was Gail Wolfe, representing the IBEW and United Workers Federal Union. Wolfe is a member of Office and Professional Employees Local 11. An award for "Farthest Rider" went to Russ McNally of Antioch, Calif. He traveled over 600 miles each way, with a "mission" to deliver a \$1,000 donation from IBEW Local 302 in Martinez, Calif. The Poker Run was held June 9 and was dedicated to the memory of Iron Workers Local 29 member Mike Roche, Sr., a founding member of Unions for Kids. For the past 10 years the event has been staged at the IBEW Local 48 union hall in Northeast Portland. Unions for Kids is a nonprofit and an all-volunteer organization, with 100 percent of the proceeds going to the kids at Doernbecher Children's Hospital.

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