

...Fast track

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25-13, with the support of all 23 Republicans plus two of the 15 Democrats: Earl Blumenauer (D-Oregon) and Ron Kind (D-Wisconsin).

The fast track bills now go to the full House and Senate for a vote.

The AFL-CIO has mounted a strenuous campaign to oppose fast track, and the White House has pulled out all the stops to push it.

The online magazine Buzzfeed reported the White House engaging in "hour-long calls to lawmakers, secret classified briefings on Capitol Hill, bully-pulpit wrangling by Obama, and even a shadowy new progressive-focused group launched by Obama supporters solely to sell the trade deals."



Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain fires up an anti-fast track crowd April 18 in downtown Portland.

On April 9, Jeff Johnson, president of the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, got his first ever call from the White House, with two aides suggesting that if he and labor continue to fight fast track, it would tear the Democratic party apart.

On April 18, the Oregon AFL-CIO sponsored a huge march through the streets of

downtown Portland. Smaller rallies were held the same day in Bend, Salem, Eugene, Medford and Coos Bay.

"The American people—I don't care if you're a Republican, a Democrat, Independent, Working Family Party—poll after poll says 'we hate this.' And for a damn good reason," said Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain. "For 25

years we've hated this. We've seen the impact on our jobs. We've seen the impact on the economy. We've seen the impact on our children's future, and it's wrong. It's wrong."

Barbara Dudley, a founder of the Oregon Working Families Party, said Wyden, in his deal with Republicans, touts the inclusion of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for service workers.

"Why is that necessary?" Dudley asked. "Because this trade agreement is going to screw service workers the same way the last ones have screwed

all the manufacturing workers. That's why they're going to have to extend TAA."

The AFL-CIO wants union members to call their Congressional representatives and urge them to oppose fast track.

Call 1-855-712-8441 to be automatically patched through to your member of Congress. In Oregon, call Sen. Wyden, Earl Blumenauer, Suzanne Bonamici, Kurt Schrader and Greg Walden. In Washington, call Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, and Jaime Herrera Beutler.

Trade-dislocated workers may get better benefits ... thanks to Medicare cuts

The same day it approved "fast track," the House Ways and Means Committee voted to expand aid for workers who lose their jobs because of foreign trade. But the bill the committee recommended April 23 pays for the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) in part with future cuts to Medicare. That drew protest from the AFL-CIO and from groups representing hospitals and doctors.

The TAA program pays for job training, wage replacement, and health insurance. Right now, the program is funded at a bare bones level and only applies to manufacturing workers certified to have lost their jobs because of offshoring or foreign competition with countries the United States has trade agreements with. Under the expanded version, the benefits would apply to service workers as well, and to job losses caused by trade with countries like China and India that don't have trade agreements with the United States.

The bill—sponsored by Rep. David Reichert (R-Wash.)—authorizes \$450 million a year for the TAA program through 2021, which is less than the \$575 million the Obama Administration requested. And it offsets that expenditure with cuts elsewhere, including to a health care tax credit and to Medicare: Under the bill, automatic budget cuts to Medicare under a policy known as sequestration would increase by 0.25 percent in 2024, a \$700 million cut.

"It pits individuals who need assistance from TAA against Medicare beneficiaries," AFL-CIO government affairs director

William Samuel wrote in a April 23 letter to members of Congress opposing the bill.

The bill must still pass the full House and Senate before becoming law. In the past, bills extending TAA benefits have often passed at the same time as trade bills, to give members of Congress political cover for approving trade agreements that cause American job losses.

...Cowlitz PLA

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retary of the Building Trades Council, anticipates that PLAs will be signed for the other phases of the project, including the Exit 16 interchange, which will need to be updated to handle higher traffic volumes.

Cowlitz Tribe Chairman Bill Iyall expects the overall project will generate more than 1,000 construction jobs during the 18-month build-out. Once open, the resort will provide more than 1,500 permanent jobs. The tribe has signed a neutrality agreement that will allow workers to join a union without any interference.

The tribe signed a similar PLA with the construction trades in 2005. The project has been held up in the courts by challenges from several local entities, including the City of Vancouver and the Clark County Board of Councilors.

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe gained federal recognition as a tribe in 2000. In 2010 the Bureau of Indian Affairs approved its application to establish the Cowlitz reservation on 152 acres of land off of I-5.

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