

What's next for TPP? A stealth vote?

Trans-Pacific Partnership would increase U.S. trade with nations that violate human rights

America's ambassadors to Brunei and Malaysia were in Portland March 21 — for a panel presentation sponsored by Nike. Brunei and Malaysia are considered serious human rights abusers, but they would join the United States in a 12-nation Pacific Rim free-trade zone if the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement is approved by Congress and other nations. Nike is strongly in favor of the TPP, which would eliminate tariffs on its shoes made in Vietnam and elsewhere.

The ambassador panel — “What’s Next for the TPP?” — was hosted by the non-profit World Affairs Council of Oregon and “co-presented” by the trade promotion arm of the U.S. Commerce Department. Michael Shannon, director of the Oregon Fair Trade Coalition, didn’t attend the panel, and instead protested outside with several dozen others. But Shannon thinks he already knows “what’s next for the TPP” — President Barack Obama will wait until af-



“What phrase is missing from the over 5,000 pages of the Trans-Pacific Partnership? Human rights.”

— Michael Shannon, director of the Oregon Fair Trade Coalition

ter the November election to schedule a vote on the agreement in the lame duck session of Congress. That’s because the TPP is unpopular with the American public. Both Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump have campaigned against it, and Sanders’ pressure on the trade issue has led even Hillary Clinton to say she’s opposed to it, after having praised it as the “gold standard” of trade agreements when she was serving as Obama’s secretary of state.

Notably, one of the protesters would like the chance to vote on the TPP: Former state representative Dave McTeague, who’s challenging Congressman Kurt Schrader in the May Democratic primary, turned up at the protest wearing an ILWU baseball cap. The In-



Rep. Rob Nosse

ternational Longshore and Warehouse Union — which opposes the TPP despite the fact that it might mean more work for its longshore worker members — has endorsed McTeague.

“What phrase is missing from the over 5,000 pages of the TPP?” Shannon asked protesters via bullhorn. “Human rights.”

Malaysia was widely criticized for its record of tolerating human trafficking after mass graves of trafficking victims were discovered last year. And in 2014, the Sultan of Brunei announced that the country will adopt sharia law, including whipping for alcohol consumption, jail time for Christian missionaries or for Muslims who miss Friday



Several dozen protesters rallied against the TPP March 21 in Portland. Joining them was Dave McTeague, Democratic candidate for Oregon’s Fifth Congressional District, pictured below.

prayers, and death by stoning for those convicted of adultery or homosexual acts. Under the TPP, Brunei would get tariff-free access to the U.S. market.

That bothers State Rep. Rob Nosse, who says passing the treaty will *lessen* America’s ability to pressure countries like Brunei and Malaysia to improve human rights.

“As a gay man, a union representative, and a state representative, I ask our members of Congress to oppose this trade treaty,” Nosse told protesters.



Foreign trade ruled a factor in Newberg paper mill closure

Foreign trade contributed to the November 2015 closure of the Newberg WestRock recycled paper mill, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has determined. About 200 workers lost their jobs in the closure, most of them members of the Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers (AWPPW). WestRock, based in Georgia, announced the closure three weeks after acquiring the Newberg mill as part of its purchase of SP Fiber. The DOL found that the closure was in part a result of increased imports from Canada, China and other countries.

Because of the DOL ruling, the workers will be eligible for trade-related dislocated worker benefits including a health coverage tax credit, income support for those who’ve used up all their unemployment insurance and are enrolled in a training program, and extra help for those 50 and older who are reemployed at a lower wage than at their previous job.



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