

# ...Untangling Trump's trade policy

From Page 1

automotive parts.

- Tariffs on solar panels and washing machines** On Jan. 23, 2018, the Administration announced 30 percent tariffs on foreign-made solar panels and 20 to 50 percent tariffs on foreign-made washing machines.
- Retaliatory tariffs on China** On March 22, Trump announced that he would order 25 percent tariffs on \$50 billion worth of Chinese exports to the U.S., more than 1,300 items in all, from flat-screen televisions to aircraft parts to medical devices. Officially, the tariffs are in response to China's practice of requiring American businesses to share intellectual property with Chinese companies if they want to do business in China. The tariffs took effect June 30.
- Flipflop on Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP)** Having called the TPP the "rape of our country" during his campaign, Trump in his first week in office formally withdrew the United States from the proposed 12-nation Pacific Rim trade agreement — which Obama negotiated but failed to ratify. But on April 12, 2018, Trump shocked farm-state lawmakers and governors with a remark that he was looking to rejoin the TPP. Later in the day, he tweeted that he'd only get back in if the TPP became a much better deal. And four days after that, he tweeted that he didn't like the TPP after all, and would rather do bilateral deals.
- Talks on NAFTA** Trump promised during his 2016 campaign to withdraw

from NAFTA. That could still happen. So far, he's attempting to renegotiate it. In the negotiations, Trump trade representatives have proposed to eliminate NAFTA's much-criticized "investor-state dispute settlement" process, in which foreign corporations can sue governments over rules they say unfairly harm expected profits. Trump negotiators also have proposed that NAFTA not continue automatically, but have a sunset clause; that domestic content requirements on autos be strengthened; and that restrictions on "buy local" and "buy American" policies in government purchasing be lessened. Trump wanted the negotiations to wrap up quickly, but that's not happening. Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan said May 17 would be the deadline for getting the current Congress to vote on a revised NAFTA. On July 1, Mexicans elected a new president, left-populist Andrés Manuel López Obrador; Trump will have a different negotiating partner when Obrador takes office Dec. 1.

Will Trump's trade moves succeed? In year one of his term, the trade balance actually worsened. In 2017, the trade deficit reached \$566 billion, its highest level since 2008. The U.S. goods deficit with China alone grew 8 percent to a record \$375 billion. [The last time the United States had an overall trade surplus was 1975.]

U.S. labor leaders who have been critical of so many other

Trump moves — cutting corporate taxes, slashing federal worker union rights, appointing union foes to head federal agencies — have found at least some things to approve of in Trump's trade moves.

When business groups and Republicans in Congress howled in protest as tariffs were announced in March, national AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka defended the policy in an opinion piece in the *Washington Post*: "The politicians who are screaming about a trade war have one thing in common: They are beholden to Wall Street. The real trade war is being waged directly on working people — our jobs, our communities, our way of life. We've been getting our butts kicked for decades because the rules allow global companies to profit at our expense rather than letting us rise together. It's a rigged game. ... Wall Street CEOs and powerful billionaires have rigged our economic rules to protect and maximize their profits. Their trade rules boost outsourcing, labor exploitation and environmental degradation — cutting the legs out from under working people and our communities. Trade has become, like tax cuts and austerity, a primary weapon in CEOs' war on workers."

## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

### Kaiser Permanente may be near a deal with breakaway union group

A recently formed breakaway coalition of unions may be near its first national contract with Kaiser Permanente. The coalition, known as the Alliance of Health Care Unions (ACHU), formed March 26 when 22 local unions left the existing Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions (CKPU) over differences with its largest member, SEIU United Healthcare West. On June 13, another union left CKPU to join ACHU: UNITE HERE Local 5, which represents about 2,000 Kaiser employees in Hawaii. That brought the ACHU coalition to a total of about 47,000 members in 23 local unions: They are local affiliates of the Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals-American Federation of Teachers, Teamsters, AFSCME, Operating Engineers, United Food and Commercial Workers, UNITE HERE, United Steel Workers, and United Nurses Association of California. CKPU meanwhile represents 68,700 members of 12 locals of the Service Employees and Office and Professional Employees unions.

Kaiser Permanente quickly recognized ACHU, and on May 22 the two sides came to agreement on a Labor Management Partnership Agreement substantially similar to the one Kaiser has had with CKPU since 1997.

Since then, Kaiser and ACHU have held three rounds of contract bargaining with another round scheduled July 8 and 9.

UFCW Healthcare Division Director Nate Bernstein said the goal is to finish by July 9 if a good agreement can be achieved. The ACHU has been pushing for wage increases, improved health benefits for retired and active members, and maintenance of retirement benefits, he said.

The national agreement covers core economic items, and is supplemented by local agreements. Bargaining on the local agreements would continue after a national agreement is reached, with a goal of having new agreements in place before the existing ones begin to expire Sept. 30, 2018.

Bargaining between Kaiser and the CKPU has yet to begin.

### Machinists authorize strike at Weyerhaeuser

Members of Machinists District Lodge W24 in Washington and Oregon voted by more than 90 percent June 28 to reject a company contract offer and give the union bargaining committee the

authority to call a strike. The union represents about 1,200 workers at Weyerhaeuser facilities in Washington and Oregon. Before beginning a strike, the union intends to return to the bargaining table to see if Weyerhaeuser will improve its offer.

### Teamsters reach deal at UPS

The Teamsters Union announced June 21 that it reached tentative agreement with UPS on a new five-year nationwide contract covering 260,000 workers. Bargaining continues on local supplemental agreements, with the next meeting scheduled July 9-12 in Minneapolis. Negotiations are also still under way on a contract for a smaller group of UPS Freight employees.

The union said it won't release full details of the national contract until local bargaining is completed, but it did summarize some highlights:

- Across-the-board hourly wage increases of \$4.15 over five years.
- Creation of a new classification of lower-paid full-time drivers that would do weekend deliveries. The drivers would work Sunday to Thursday or Tuesday to Saturday. Wages would start at \$20.50

and reach a top rate of \$34.79 by Aug. 1, 2022. Currently full time drivers earn over \$36 an hour, and earn double time for Sunday work.

- For part-time workers, an end to a two-tier wage structure and an increase in the starting wage from \$10 to \$13 an hour as of Aug. 1, rising to \$15.50 Aug. 1, 2022.
- Increased employer contributions to health and pension funds

After local negotiations are completed, the agreement will go before the membership for an electronic vote.

The current five-year contract runs through July 31, 2018.

The nationwide tentative agreement came after UPS workers voted to authorize a strike by more than a 90 percent margin. UPS publicly downplayed the strike vote, calling it "a routine and expected part of the negotiation process."



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