

# Texas Fair Trade Coalition

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## Stop the “Fast Track” to Unfair Trade

### ***What is Fast Track?***

Fast Track is a procedure, established by the Nixon administration through the Trade Act of 1974, which enables the President to take full control of United States trade negotiations and to broker trade deals with other countries without the input of Congress, or the American people.

### ***How does Fast Track work?***

The President negotiates a trade agreement on which Congress has no input, neither on what country (or countries) the agreement is with nor on the content of the agreement. Instead, the President relies on “trade advisory committees” for input and guidance. After negotiations are complete, Congress is only allowed 20 hours of debate, and is not allowed to amend the document or filibuster. Instead, they are required to vote yes or no on the document as it was presented to them.

### ***Do we need Fast Track?***

No. Fast Track is not necessary for either the brokering of trade agreements or for international trade as a whole. The United States traded internationally with no problems for hundreds of years before Fast Track was created, and as recently as the late 1990’s the Clinton administration established trade agreements without Fast Track.

### ***So why should we get rid of Fast Track?***

Recent trade agreements focus on a number of trade and non-trade issues, such as wage laws, food safety, zoning, environmental laws, and even tax laws, that greatly impact the American people. Unfortunately, because Fast Track cuts Congress out of the process, the American people are given no say on these matters. Furthermore, the trade advisory committees are comprised almost entirely of corporate lobbyists, with only a tiny percentage of the members (around 2 dozen out of more than 500 members) representing labor, environmental, or public health issues.

### ***What are some of the negative effects of Fast Track?***

Trade deals passed under Fast Track (NAFTA, for example) have encouraged corporations to move jobs out of the U.S. to lesser-developed countries, costing the American people good jobs (over a million), and allowing corporations to exploit workers in impoverished regions of the world. Similarly, the World Trade Organization (WTO), also created through Fast Track, gives privileged access to U.S. markets for products that were made by U.S. companies, but manufactured in China and other countries where the average pay is around \$1 per day.

American wage levels have hardly increased since the 1970s (\$16.06 in 1973, \$16.11 today), despite the fact that worker productivity has almost doubled. Wages suffer because workers are in no position to bargain for higher pay when a company can threaten to move all of its jobs to a foreign country where labor is much cheaper. Furthermore, the Progressive Policy Institute now estimates that in addition to the blue-collar jobs at risk, at least 12 million information-based jobs face a high risk of being outsourced. More often than not, people who lose these higher paying jobs to outsourcing are then forced to work for lower wages.