

GET READY FOR ROUND.

GOP and White House Work to Revive Fast Track

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Deirdre Fulton, staff writer, June 15, 2015
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Anti-Fast Track actions continued in Washington, D.C. on Monday, June 15. Even as they celebrated last week's quasi-victory against clandestine, corporate trade deals, civil society groups warned the fight over Fast Track was not over. They were right.

Indeed, Friday's defeat of Fast Track, or trade promotion authority, could be reversed as early as this week, with the U.S. House of Representatives reportedly considering a number of options for reviving the legislation. As Bill Moyers and Bernard Weisberger wrote in an op-ed published Monday at Common Dreams, Friday's vote was "only Round One."

"The unholy trio of Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (who has vowed to keep any of Obama's nominees from being confirmed), Speaker of the House John Boehner (who has thwarted just about every Democratic legislative proposal of the past several years), and President Obama (a Democrat, in case you are having trouble remembering) are as one in a desperate effort to rescue their Frankenstein-like creation," Moyers and Weisberger wrote.

Congressional rules required that the House approve both Fast Track and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) in order for the overall trade package to move forward as it did in the Senate.

Thus, Friday's overwhelming "No" vote on TAA—which went down 126-302—meant defeat for those angling to hand over trade negotiating power from Congress to President Barack Obama.

Many Democrats, including Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), voted against TAA in an express effort to derail Fast Track.

Writing for Electronic Frontier Foundation, Maira Sutton described the outcome as "a strong signal that even these

powerful interests and politicians could not outdo the massive popular opposition that we have all demonstrated against Fast Track and backroom corporate deals."

But some warn that such opposition risks being overcome by procedural gimmicks. As Sutton further explained:

Not willing to give up, the Republican House leadership voted to force yet another vote on TAA next week. If TAA passes next week, all of these parts could still move together as a single package, straight to the President's desk. If the TAA fails next week, then Fast Track will move back to the Senate to see if it can pass without TAA—giving us another chance to oppose it.

Now it's going to take somewhat of a miracle for the President and House Republicans to change their mind on TAA by such a large margin (around 180 votes) by Tuesday—that's their deadline on holding that second TAA vote. But we know that the White House and proponents of these secretive,

undemocratic agreements are willing to do almost anything to pass these deals with even less oversight from Congress.

Politico reports on some of the options available to House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) and his pro-Fast Track leadership team:

Boehner could schedule another vote on TAA for Tuesday,

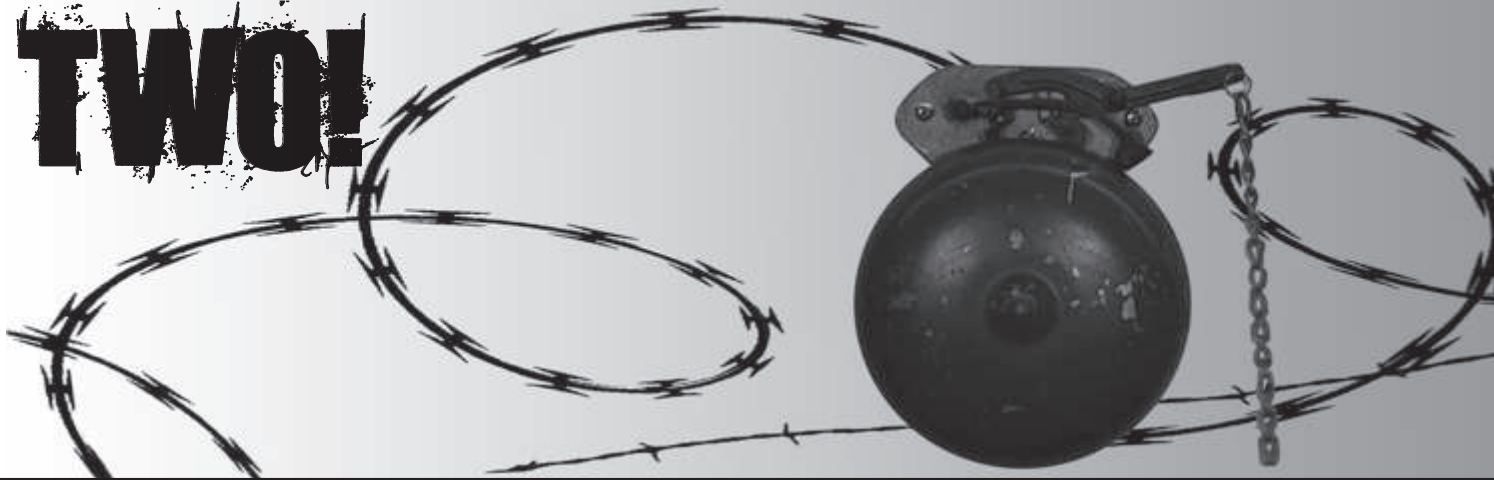
but under the current legislative rules, he needs to make a decision by Monday afternoon. Even if he decides to go ahead with another vote, it's unlikely to succeed. He would have to flip roughly 75 Democratic votes.

The speaker could also try to pass fast-track authority on its own, without TAA attached. But at least some of the 29 Democrats who voted for fast track might oppose the legislation if help for workers displaced by trade isn't part of



Anti-Fast Track actions continued in Washington, D.C. on Monday. (Photo: @BXEACTION/Twitter)

TWO!



the package. Senior aides doubt the Senate can pass a fast-track bill without the job training piece.

Another alternative for Boehner would be to try and combine TPA and TAA into one bill, but GOP leadership sources say that would not pass the chamber.

A less plausible option would be to try to insert TAA into another must-pass bill. But Democrats seem ready to oppose any legislation that includes TAA.

Of course, none of these options would make corporate-friendly trade deals like the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) more appealing to progressives who oppose such pacts for their negative impacts on the environment, jobs, and democracy.

“Let’s be clear, we do not need a ‘do over’ vote for Fast Track, we need an entire ‘redo’ of U.S. trade policy,” said Erich Pica of Friends of the Earth in a statement on Monday.

Members of the EU Parliament on Monday added their voices to the chorus of opposition to Fast Track, urging U.S. legislators—like these 28 Democrats who voted for Fast Track—not to abdicate their responsibility to constituents.

“It is clear that TPP and [TransAtlantic Trade and Investment Partnership] are far reaching treaties which would have deep consequences for all countries involved

and their citizens, and it is crucial that different interests are taken into account, which can only be done by democratically elected representatives,” the letter read. “However, the proposed Fast Track Package would allow the Administration to legislate bypassing the will and opinion of Congress, undermining the principle of separation of powers. So is the current situation in the European Union, whereby the European Parliament has no voice in the negotiations led by the European Commission.”

The 42 signatories continued: “We, members of the European Parliament, have never been asked if we wanted to allow the executive branch to negotiate without regard to our position. Our voice and the voices of those we represent are ignored. On the other hand, you, the members of Congress of the United States, have the opportunity to preserve that constitutional right, and we urge you to keep it.”

That window of opportunity is swiftly shutting, however.

In her analysis of the congressional machinations, Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch director Lori Wallach noted that while the path to enactment of Fast Track remains muddy, “the corporate coalition, White House and GOP leaders remain hell bent on finding it.”

“The final chapter for Fast Track,” she wrote, “will be written in the coming weeks.”

Gilbert I. Patino, June 2, 1940-May 28, 2015

Gilbert and his wife, Yolanda were always together attending and volunteering at cultural and community events. Gilbert, an avid researcher into his family history was proud of his roots tracing his family back to the original 16 families who came to San Antonio in 1731 and established the first civil government. He was also a direct descendent of Alejo de la Encarnación Pérez, the youngest known person in the Alamo during the battle and the last known survivor who lived until 1918, at the age of 83. Gilbert was buried in the Westside alongside Alejo who rests at San Fernando Cemetery #1 among other historic figures buried there. An active member of groups like Los Bexareños Genealogical and Historical Society, he was also very involved with the cultural arts especially at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center. He and Yolanda would often attend Esperanza events, also, and supported the programming at El Rinconcito de Esperanza. Our heartfelt condolences to Gilbert’s family, particularly his wife, Yolanda, and their three daughters—Rowena Sancho, Regina Castillo and Patience Lares, their families and his many friends. *Que en paz descanse.*

