

Is TPP Too Big to Pass?

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This week, a small number of Democrats said that the Trans-Pacific Partnership is “too big” to pass Congress and must be opposed. As evidence, they printed out the more than 5,000 pages of text and wheeled it around on a hand cart.

But here’s the thing: **it takes more than a few pages to write the most progressive trade deal in history.** The deal is large because it covers a lot of ground to ensure middle class prosperity in the 21st century.

You need a lot of pages to eliminate over 18,000 tariffs on Made in the USA goods. American exporters face some of the steepest trade barriers in the world. That’s why TPP cuts import taxes—or tariffs—on products that we export to TPP countries. TPP cuts taxes on *Made in the USA* exports as high as 388% on Colorado pork, 43% on Florida OJ, 68% on Illinois-made dump trucks, 55% on Kentucky bourbon, 70% on Michigan-made cars, and a whopping 737% on South Carolina peanuts.

You also need some ink to spell out the most progressive rules for workers ever. TPP mandates the right to unionize and collective bargaining, minimum wage standards,

workplace safety requirements, work-week limits, forced labor restrictions, and ending all child labor. Because you are only as strong as your weakest member, TPP provides a path for compliance for countries with low worker standards. Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei all have made comprehensive and enforceable commitments to ensure each can eventually meet TPP's high standards. Vietnam will have independent labor unions for the first time ever, and Malaysia must have strong protections against forced labor and trafficking.

Don't forget that you also need a lot of room to detail the strongest environmental protections of any trade deal in history. Similar to the labor provisions, TPP puts environmental protections at the core of the agreement and makes those obligations fully enforceable. TPP includes the first-ever provisions to prohibit fishery subsidies, which hurt overfished species, protections for national parks and other federal areas, conservation obligations regarding marine animals like whales, sharks, and turtles, and commitments to combat illegal fishing, wildlife trafficking, and illegal logging. Further, to address climate change, TPP cuts tariffs on environmentally beneficial products and technologies, such as solar panels and wind turbines.

If we don't write high-standard rules, we know who will: China. The Chinese are racing to complete their own regional trade agreement in Asia, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which includes all of the TPP countries (except the United States, Chile, and Peru) along with India, South Korea, and several smaller countries. Their deal doesn't need to be long because we know what kind of rules China promotes—exclusion, favoritism, and lower standards for labor and corruption. In fact, multiple first-hand accounts of the RCEP negotiations confirm that the focus is on tariff reduction and nothing else.

High-standard rules aren't written on a napkin. That's why TPP is big—it's the most progressive deal in history with the highest standards to ensure Americans can compete and win. We've got the ink. Let's use it.

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