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LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

By: Arthur Stamoulis, Executive Director
CITIZENS TRADE CAMPAIGN

The White House just gave Congress official notice of its intention to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) — and, already, corporations are trying to dictate how NAFTA is rewritten, further padding their pockets at the expense of working families, public health and the environment. For too long, the United States and the world have been saddled with awful trade agreements that enrich corporate elites at the expense of good-paying jobs, affordable medicine and environmental sustainability.

Donald Trump got into the White House, in large part, on the promise to reverse this trend — but the damage caused by NAFTA and other trade deals could actually get worse if trade agreements continue to be made through a corrupt, secretive process in which hundreds of corporate advisors call the shots while the public is locked out.

Xenophobic scapegoating that pits nation against nation distracts from who is really responsible for the harm caused by NAFTA and subsequent pacts. The problem with NAFTA has never been about Mexico versus the United States, but rather, multinational corporations against the rest of us. The truth is that the corporations behind NAFTA and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) are salivating over the chance to use a shadowy NAFTA renegotiation process to their benefit. They want to rewrite NAFTA to add in the worst of the TPP — raking in billions for themselves with disastrous consequences for the majority of people both at home and abroad.

All signs thus far indicate that Trump is giving these corporations the reigns. The White House's leaked plan for NAFTA's renegotiation signals an expansion of TPP-style provisions that would weaken food safety standards, restrict access to generic medication, deregulate Wall Street and offer completely inadequate labor and environmental standards. The administration is not even proposing to eliminate the

NAFTA chapter that threatens "Buy American" and "Buy Local" public procurement preferences.

Perhaps most troubling still, the leaked White House plan explicitly states that they want to maintain NAFTA's controversial Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions — special protections for corporations that make it easier to offshore jobs and to attack public interest laws in the U.S., Mexico and Canada. Trade agreements like NAFTA and the TPP were created behind closed doors with the aid of hundreds of corporate advisors who had privileged access to negotiating texts and to trade negotiators, while the public was shut out.

Without massive public opposition, Americans, as well as people in Mexico and Canada, will remain explicitly barred from knowing what is being proposed in our names. All while corporate lobbyists get to cozy up to negotiators, telling them what to include in trade negotiations and what to leave out.

Under this system, the public literally won't get to see what's in trade agreements until after negotiations are concluded, new pacts have already been signed and changes become all but impossible. Make no mistake: this rigged system can only deliver trade deals that benefit the 1% at the expense of majorities in the U.S. and around the globe.

Trade agreements are too far-reaching to allow them to be written in a process that shuts out the public. These deals affect jobs, wages, the environment, food safety, access to medicine, human rights, financial regulations, public procurement, indigenous sovereignty and so much more.

Trade pacts can't continue to just be back-room deals for corporations. With a new national debate on trade policy finally taking root, it's time to speak out.

The PA Conference will keep the affiliates updated on this renegotiation process as it unfolds.

