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As NAFTA Hearings Open, More Than 100,000 Petitions Delivered and 50,000 Public Comments Filed Demanding a New Deal to Benefit Working People, Not Just Corporations

Unprecedented Public Response to Administration Request for Comment Spotlights Political Stakes of NAFTA Renegotiation

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The broad coalition that derailed the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) delivered more than 100,000 petitions demanding the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) be replaced with a deal that benefits working people. Activists with “Replace NAFTA” signs and T-shirts made the delivery today as witnesses arrived for hearings on NAFTA renegotiation at the U.S. International Trade Commission. This followed the unprecedented submission of more than 50,000 comments to the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) docket on NAFTA talks.

The dozen groups that alerted members to the opportunity to submit comments were surprised by the overwhelming response, which crashed the USTR’s submission platform. The 16 groups that asked members to sign petitions calling for a transparent negotiating process and a replacement of the NAFTA to stop its ongoing damage of job loss, downward pressure on wages and attacks on environmental and health laws gathered more than 100,000 signatures in several weeks.

“President Trump must live up to his campaign promise and renegotiate a NAFTA that puts working Americans first and moves beyond the failed, corporate-driven agreements of the past. An insular process can only yield insular outcomes. We defeated the TPP because it was drafted in secret by hundreds of corporate advisers, and was packed full of policies that would undermine our laws and protections, while promoting the outsourcing of American jobs and

suppression of wages. We, along with the hundreds of thousands of Americans who have signed these petitions, will continue to demand a new, comprehensive approach to trade policy under the Trump administration,” said U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.).

The petition and many of the comments focused on two themes. First, if corporate elites are allowed to dictate how NAFTA is renegotiated, the agreement could become more damaging for working families and the environment. Second, modest tweaks would not stop NAFTA’s ongoing damage, much less deliver on President Donald Trump’s promises for a deal that will create American jobs and raise wages.

Advocating for a NAFTA renegotiation that benefits working people in all three countries, a diverse coalition of consumer, labor and digital organizations coordinated the collection of petition signatures challenging the Trump administration to:

- Make the negotiating process transparent;
- Eliminate NAFTA’s foreign investor protections and investor-state dispute settlement, which promote job offshoring and empower corporations to sue the U.S. government for uncapped sums before tribunals of three corporate lawyers;
- Add tough and strongly enforced labor, wage and environmental standards;
- Ensure imported food, goods and services meet U.S. consumer and environmental standards;
- Cut rules that waive Buy American and Buy Local policies and offshore U.S. tax dollars; and
- Eliminate rules that drive up the price of lifesaving medicines by giving pharmaceutical companies extended monopolies to avoid generic competition.

Statements from Coalition Organizations:

“The only way for NAFTA’s renegotiation to avoid delivering yet another rigged, corporate deal is for the Trump administration to end the closed-door process with hundreds of privileged corporate advisers that got us into the original NAFTA debacle. Americans are demanding a transparent process that puts working families and healthy communities ahead of narrow corporate interests.”

-Arthur Stamoulis, executive director, Citizens Trade Campaign

“NAFTA desperately needs a top-to-bottom overhaul that puts the interests of communities, workers, consumers and the environment ahead of corporations. We cannot use the renegotiation of NAFTA to revive the worst deregulatory provisions of the scuttled TPP. We urge the Trump administration to consider the interests of the public, not corporations when renegotiating this flawed trade deal.”

-Wenonah Hauter, executive director, Food & Water Watch Action Fund

“Labor provisions in free trade agreements like NAFTA can be an important tool in protecting workers’ rights in global trading systems. But too often, weak labor standards and a slow review process obscure violations rather than help remedy them. Making NAFTA better will require

transparent negotiations that include workers as equals at the bargaining table and prioritize their rights and welfare.”

-Judy Gearhart, executive director, International Labor Rights Forum.

“Today marks just the start of our renewed fight for trade deals that prioritize fair pay, good jobs and workplace protections over CEO salaries and profits. We are sick of corporate lobbyists writing secret, job-killing trade policies that harm our communities and democracy. Right now we have the opportunity to fix the decades-old problems with NAFTA and lay out new standards for a 21st century global economy that allow working families to thrive. As more working people across the U.S., Mexico, and Canada speak out, we can stop stealthy elites from bending the rules for their own gains while hurting the rest of us.”

-Sarita Gupta, executive director, Jobs with Justice

“Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross has said he wants to use TPP as the starting point for renegotiating NAFTA. That would be doubling down on the model that has generated unprecedented public opposition, including from Trump voters in Michigan and Wisconsin. The starting point for NAFTA reset should be abolishing secret courts where corporations can sue against public interest regulations before a tribunal of corporate lawyers, and reducing rather than increasing the monopoly power of brand-name pharmaceutical companies that is driving up drug prices and blocking access of life-saving medicines.”

-Robert Naiman, policy director, Just Foreign Policy

"Our Revolution was proud to stand with our union, environmental and other movement brothers and sisters to defeat the TPP. Now we are working to ensure that NAFTA's renegotiation benefits black, brown and white working people in the U.S. and ensures fairness for workers in Mexico and Canada. We cannot continue to give corporations a pass to write trade deals that destroy our living standards and leave millions in poverty."

-Larry Cohen, board chair, Our Revolution

“NAFTA wasn't good when it was passed, and the renegotiations look like they're going to be no better or even worse. They're taking the worst from the TPP and incorporating it into the renegotiations. This will lose Americans jobs, compromise our civil liberties and weaken our environment. Say no to NAFTA!”

-Andrea Miller, executive director, People Demanding Action

“Today, what you are hearing from over 100,000 Americans is that workers matter. The environment matters. Our communities matter. By opening up the NAFTA agreement to discussion, we have a unique opportunity to rewrite the wrongs that this trade agreement has created for thousands of workers in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Together we can change this terrible injustice by insisting on transparency in the process. We must demand strong labor standards and rules and create mechanisms for transborder collective bargaining, guaranteeing a living wage and ensuring that work safety standards are applied in all three countries.”

-Dr. Gabriela Lemus, president, Progressive Congress Action Fund

“People nationwide are watching closely to see if the same corporate-dominated negotiating process will continue and another rigged deal expanding NAFTA’s damage will result, especially after some Trump officials said the TPP, derailed by years of opposition by people coast to coast, is the starting place for NAFTA talks.”

-Lori Wallach, director, Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch

Coalition Organizations:

- AFL-CIO
- Citizens Trade Campaign
- Communications Workers of America
- Corporate Accountability International
- Daily Kos
- Economic Policy Institute
- Food & Water Action Fund
- Friends of the Earth
- Good Jobs Nation
- International Labor Rights Forum
- Jobs With Justice
- Just Foreign Policy
- Our Revolution
- People Demanding Action
- Progressive Congress Action Fund
- Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch
- SumOfUs

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