



graphic: Kjersten Jeppesen

# Trading the Environment

## Say "No deal" to the New Trade Deal

### Democrats Fail to Deliver on "Fair" Trade Policy

by Nancy Price

Late on May 10th at a surprise news conference, Bush trade officials, Speaker Pelosi, and several House and Senate Democratic and Republican trade committee leaders announced the outline of a "deal" to facilitate new "bi-partisan" cooperation on trade. That's the hype. What's the reality?

Bush, the administration, free-traders in Congress and big business desperately want the Peru, Panama,

Colombia and South Korea trade agreements to pass Congress before Fast Track expires on June 30. They claim there's "conceptual" agreement to change certain provisions in these Bush-negotiated agreements, especially with Peru and Panama, and they hope to add Colombia, despite the fact that there has been a rash of labor union assassinations there. Showing flexibility on labor, the environment, and pharmaceuticals, the administration aims to grease the rails to get Fast Track renewed.

Let's be clear. When Congress passes Fast Track, they give authority to the Executive to negotiate trade agreements for the next five years, but also agree to the trade policy and goals spelled out in the 300-plus page "Fast Track" bill. This includes the number of trade agreements to be negotiated and goals to further lower trade barriers, open markets, and protect corporate profits and property. The question is whether the "deals" just announced would be included as benchmarks in the new Fast Track bill.

In Congress, momentum was growing to stop

these four trade agreements and Fast Track. Take note that in 2002, Fast Track barely passed Congress after a bitter fight. In 2005, CAFTA passed by two votes after last-minute strong-arm tactics. Recently, in the 2006 elections, 37 seats of "free traders" who voted for NAFTA, the WTO and Fast Track changed hands (7 Senate, 30 House). And, earlier this year, 71 freshman Democrats signed a letter urging Democratic leaders not to compromise on trade.

Unfortunately, these factors seemed to have been ignored in these most undemocratic, secret negotiations. There was no open discussion in committees, the Democratic party caucus, or on the floor of Congress. Representative Rangel and Senator Baucus, House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Chairs respectively, eager to "capitalize" on their new authority and power in the Democratically controlled Congress, seem to have negotiated this deal on their own "fast track."

Now Civil Society must remain vigilant and call for the binding legal text to be released and analyzed against the proposed conceptual "deals." Progress on labor, environmental and pharmaceutical provisions, and removal of the right of foreign port operators to operate U.S. ports is good. But, Public Citizen states that very important "fixes" are not part of the deal. These fixes include a ban on: off-shoring; Buy America procurement policies and NAFTA-Chapter 11-style foreign investor-rights protections. We have to make sure that these agreements cannot supercede federal or state laws on prevailing wage, recycled content, renewable energy; agriculture or food safety.

Public Citizen says you cannot paste some good provisions into bad NAFTA-like agreements. The content and process of this deal are very disappointing for the fair trade movement and will be opposed by all groups fighting for a new U.S. trade policy. Watch for AfD action alerts and stay informed at [www.citizen.org/trade](http://www.citizen.org/trade). Call your representative and senators and tell them what you think.

## Stop the Fast Track Express NOW!

The "Fast Track" trade negotiating process expires on June 30th this year. Nixon cooked up Fast Track to take away Congress' constitutional authority over U.S. trade policy. The recent "trade deal" brokered in secret by Rep. Rangel, Chair of House Ways and Means and Sen. Max Baucus of Senate Finance Committees, that Speaker Pelosi has now to "sell" to Congress, is calculated to demonstrate that Bush and the United States Trade Representative are willing to negotiate with Congress on trade, but still on "fast track."

- But, under Fast Track, the White House picks the countries, negotiates trade deals, and signs agreements before Congress votes. Congressional hearings are a sham, because our elected representatives cannot offer amendments on the final text. Congress is limited to 20 hours of debate before a yes or no vote.
- Yet, now, Rangel and Baucus negotiated a deal in secret, leaving their Congressional colleagues in the dark. How democratic is this? In Nov. 2006, 37 candidates, 7 in the Senate and 30 in the House, won Congressional seats opposing free trade deals – like NAFTA, CAFTA, the WTO, and many bilateral agreements (FTAs).
- Call the U.S. Capitol at (202) 224-3121. Ask to be connected to your Representative and Senators. Ask for the "Trade Legislative Assistant" and say you oppose Fast Track and secretly brokered deals.
- We don't need Fast Track. We need new trade policy with representatives of civil society at the table and an open, fair, transparent process with full "democratic" debate on trade agreements that protect the rights of people, their communities and nature.