

Release of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Full Text Shows Victory for Corporate Rights

Saturday 7 November 2015, by [FLOWERS Margaret](#), [NOOR Jaisal](#) (Date first published: 6 November 2015).

JAISAL NOOR, PRODUCER, TRNN: The long-awaited text of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, has finally been released to the public. The controversial and until now highly secretive trade pact would reduce trade barriers and transform how business is done for the twelve Pacific Rim countries that have signed on. The release kicks off months of public and congressional review, and it's been championed by President Obama, who has billed the deal as a boon for the middle class and says that for the first time in history, a trade deal includes fully enforceable standards that will protect workers' rights and the environment. But to secure its passage, the president will likely need Republican support to overcome opposition from labor, environmental, and privacy groups who say the TPP only serves to expand corporate power and wealth at the expense of the majority of citizens, while renewed global protests have already been planned, with a week of action in DC kicking off on November 14. Now joining us to discuss all of this and more is Margaret Flowers. She is a co-director of [PopularResistance.org](#), and [It's Our Economy](#). She is a physician and a candidate for the U.S. Senate from Maryland. Thanks so much for joining us, Margaret.

MARGARET FLOWERS: Thank you for having me, Jaisal.

NOOR: So Margaret, we know you've been following this for some time now, since this whole process began some five years ago. And now that we actually have started to look at the text we know it's massive, 30 chapters. Where does it, where do things lie? Is this going to be the saving grace for the middle class, as President Obama has said? Or is it going to lead to further corporate domination?

FLOWERS: What's really interesting, because we have more than 20 years of experience now with these types of so-called trade agreements, and the evidence has been very consistent and very clear that despite the rhetoric that we hear, that these are going to bring us more exports and more jobs, it does exactly the opposite. And we see an increase in our trade deficit with countries that we have these agreements with. That means for every time that we increase the trade deficit, that means more lost jobs. We see that they've claimed before to have strong worker protections, environmental protections. But just as we see in our daily life, you can create all the regulations that you want. But if they aren't enforced they really mean nothing, and that's what we've seen from these agreements. So all evidence points to the fact that these are going to continue the same failed model of trade that we've had for more than 20 years now.

NOOR: But what do you say to people like President Obama that say these protections are enforceable? And supporters also point to what's happening, for example, in Vietnam. The *New York Times* notes that as part of this deal the U.S. won union rights and the right to protest for workers there.

FLOWERS: First the evidence, we've seen this from the president over and over throughout these past years of the negotiations. And there was a point where the White House put out a statement saying that environmental groups are standing with him, with this agreement, because of environmental protections. And then when the environmental groups were contacted about their

positions it was actually the opposite. They were saying no, we are opposed to this agreement because it has unenforceable environmental protection. The president claimed that it was going to, the Trans-Pacific Partnership would create 650,000 jobs. When the *Washington Post* decided to fact check that claim, they found out that it was absolutely false. They gave him four Pinocchio noses for that. There was a lot of concern about including the country of Malaysia in the Trans-Pacific Partnership because of their very poor record on human rights and human trafficking there. And so what did the administration do, they downgraded Malaysia to say that they had a better record than they actually do with no evidence to support that. So I think they've lost all credibility on this, and we have to recognize that as people that—we have to call out what's going on. We have to tell the truth, we have to look at the evidence of what has happened.

NOOR: And Margaret, I wanted to ask you, because we know some major labor unions have come out against this, but isn't there some truth in saying unions oppose this deal not really because they're concerned with workers in other countries, because they're still fighting to maintain relative privilege within the global labor force for U.S. workers?

FLOWERS: Actually, when Larry Cohen, the president of CWA testified before the Senate Finance Committee, he said that this must have the highest labor standards. And not just for the U.S., but around the world. We recognize, and I think the unions recognize, that these agreements drive a race to the bottom, and that impacts all of us. That when we promote higher labor standards elsewhere, they improve our labor standards here. It's all connected. So the Columbia free trade agreement actually had these very high standards, labor standards. And what we've seen there, years later, five years later, is that they continue to have a very hostile environment for trade unionists there, including assassinations of them and injuries of them. And so these high labor standards just aren't being enforced by the U.S. or the other countries.

NOOR: And Margaret, as a physician, we know there's provisions that deal with pharmaceuticals and their cost. Do you have concerns there as well?

FLOWERS: This has been a very big concern for the people in the countries involved in this agreement around the world, because it really is giving stronger protections to pharmaceutical and other health corporations to extend their patents, to prevent challenges through generics, and to keep the cost of pharmaceuticals high. I think what we're experiencing now in this country, you know, people are aware of how corporations, the pharmaceutical corporations, are just charging prices that aren't even related to what's realistic based on the cost of production of these drugs, just because they can. We'll see more of that. That's going to have a real impact on people not being able to have access to the care that they need. So this is a huge concern, as well as others that I won't get into now, of ways that this will harm our healthcare system and other healthcare systems, as well.

NOOR: And provisions regarding the investor state dispute settlement, or ISDS. It's one of the most controversial parts of the agreement. It allows corporations to sue governments, and basically compromise regulations on a national level. So giving—essentially, it's argued, this gives corporations sovereignty over federal laws in countries. Talk about what the impact of this could be.

FLOWERS: Sure. I think with good merit we have that discussion, because what this is doing is creating a judicial body that's outside of our legal system. This international judicial body in which corporations can sue our government if our laws to protect our communities interfere with their profits, and they can sue for their expected lost profits. And we have no mechanism to appeal this. It's above our own Supreme Court. But we as people do not have the right through this court system to sue corporations if they're causing harm to our community. So this is absolutely a increase in power for these corporations over our laws, our ability to protect our communities. And we've

already seen, through similar courts, things that have been going on such as going after, when a country has tried to raise the minimum wage, or a country has tried to negotiate for lower drug prices. Or a case going on right now where a corporation in the United States is suing Canada because Canada won't let them export fresh water to the United States. Canada wants to keep its own water. And they're being sued for over \$10 billion. So this is what we're going to see more of if these types of agreements go forward.

NOOR: And so in the coming days and weeks, we at the Real News, and I'm sure Popular Resistance, are going to be parsing through this release. What should people be looking out for, and also, this is just starting the public review process. How can people be heard, how can people get involved in this process? It's been very secretive for the past five years.

FLOWERS: That's right. The text of the Trans-Pacific Partnership was just released this morning. It's more than 2,000 pages of very highly technical legal language that was written by corporate lawyers from big companies like Monsanto, Pfizer, Exxon, you name it. And so fortunately we do have a number of organizations that have had some access to some portions of the text. And so they're starting to release their analyses and will continue to do that. So groups like the AFL-CIO, like the Sierra Club, like internet freedom groups and others are analyzing that. And on our website, FlushTheTPP.org, we have a page where we're gathering all of those analyses and putting them in one place so they're easy for people to find. So we ask you to go to FlushTheTPP.org, look on our News page, and you'll find a link to those various analyses which we will continue to update. It's really important that we create a political culture in this country that makes it impossible for our members of Congress to vote for the Trans-Pacific Partnership. And so that's up to us to do that. That means educating ourselves. Spreading the word. Pressuring our members of Congress. It also means resistance, and that's why we're doing these days of action in Washington, DC, and people can learn about that as well at FlushTheTPP.org on the Actions page. And it's really, these actions are designed to both raise awareness and also to put pressure on our lawmakers and let them know that the people are not going to stand for this. So we really encourage people to get involved. We've beat these types of agreements before but it's only come because of pressure in the streets, in addition to the things that other people are doing. So this is a critical time for us.

NOOR: Margaret Flowers, thanks so much for joining us.

FLOWERS: Thank you for having me.

NOOR: And go to TheRealNews.com for our full and ongoing coverage of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Thank you so much for joining us.

P.S.

* The Real News. 6 Nov 2015:

<http://www.flushthetpp.org/release-of-tpp-full-text-shows-victory-for-corporate-rights/>

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