Open Letter to All Members of Congress:
No on Fast Track and the TPP

Four years ago, after careful consideration, the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) decided to endorse the U.S.-Korea free trade agreement, making us one of the only labor unions to do so. We viewed the Korea deal—which had improved labor standards and was estimated to create over 20,000 jobs in the meat sector, as a small, but not insignificant, step forward on global trade policy. As the union that represents hundreds of thousands of meatpacking and food processing workers, we support fair trade agreements that open up new markets to sell UFCW-made products abroad.

This time is different. The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is not the Korea free trade agreement. It is neither free nor fair. And the UFCW is determined to see it defeated.

The truth is as we've heard during past trade debates, many Republicans and even some Democrats, repeatedly say that TPP won't hurt families or communities, or devastate industries, unions, or the middle and working classes.

America's families know from experience the brutal reality will be quite different.

Over the last three decades, in large part because of bad trade deals, Americans have worked harder than ever, while wages remain stagnant. Income and economic inequality has grown to historically high levels. Industry consolidation, fueled by unchecked global competition, has led to countless jobs being lost. Good union jobs have been decimated across nearly every state and replaced by either no job, or non-union jobs that barely pay above minimum wage.

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As for the TPP, while a bipartisan chorus will sing the praises of this trade deal, they choose to ignore the truth that it is America's working men and women, not them, who will pay the price as irresponsible corporations justify future cuts to wages, hours, and jobs–all in the name of "international competition."

If that wasn't bad enough, the TPP goes even further by rolling back regulations that could be construed as a "barrier to trade," which includes environmental, consumer, and labor protections. And, if there were any remaining doubts, this massive trade deal, which will impact tens of millions of American jobs, has been put together in secret, with the advice and counsel of hundreds of corporate special interests with absolutely no input from labor or other groups that fight on behalf of the working and middle classes.

Given all that we know, how any elected official, Democrat or Republican, can support TPP is inexplicable.

So, on behalf of the 1.3 million hard-working men and women of the UFCW, we are calling on every member of Congress to oppose the TPP and the fast-track legislation that would make it possible to pass the TPP.

Let me be very clear, no elected official, regardless of political party, who is truly interested in making the economy better and fairer, can responsibly support the TPP. Simply put, this trade deal, like so many others, is bad for our workers, families, and shared future.

In the end, while we may not be able to change every mind, we will remember those elected officials who stood with America's workers by voting for jobs and against another destructive trade deal. More to the point, we join with the AFL-CIO and other unions that refuse to support any member of Congress that decides to put narrow self-interests above the interests of hard-working families.

Make no mistake, we, and all of America's hard-working men and women, will be watching whether or not our elected representatives do what is right for our families.

For the sake of the better America we must all believe in, let us all hope that our elected officials come together and show bipartisan opposition to this trade deal.

Marc Perrone is the International President of the 1.3 million member United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW).

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