



Legislation Text

File #: RES 15-757, **Version:** 1

Opposing the extension of poor trade policies.

WHEREAS the U.S. economy is still struggling to recover from the Great Recession;

WHEREAS millions of America's workers are unemployed and underemployed, wages and consumer demand are far below where they should be, and inequality is at historic highs;

WHEREAS employment in manufacturing dropped by more than 4 million from 2000 to 2014;

WHEREAS the growing trade deficits exacerbated by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) displaced nearly 700,000 jobs, and trade deficits with China since China's accession to the World Trade Organization have resulted in the loss of 3.2 million jobs, more than 2 million of them in manufacturing;

WHEREAS jobs lost due to trade devastate families and entire communities and permanently reduce lifetime earnings for hundreds of thousands of workers;

WHEREAS the long decline of the American manufacturing base-exacerbated by bad trade policies that reward outsourcing-has undermined our economic security and poses a direct threat to our national security as well as local economies;

WHEREAS the off-shoring of manufacturing and service jobs deprives local, state, and federal governments of sorely needed revenues, jeopardizing the livelihoods of millions of federal, state, county, and municipal employees and construction workers whose jobs depend upon infrastructure building, repair, and maintenance;

WHEREAS under NAFTA-style trade rules, the U.S. trade deficit has increased dramatically since 1993, the year before NAFTA went into effect, to more than \$476 billion in 2013;

WHEREAS the disproportionate voice of powerful global corporations in the formation of U.S. "free trade" agreements has advanced an economic agenda that threatens democracy by imposing a constraint on the laws and rules that local, state, and federal governments can implement without being the target of a trade law challenge;

WHEREAS NAFTA and all but two of the U.S. trade deals have followed it include special legal rights for foreign investors, known as "investor-to-state dispute settlement" or ISDS, that allow foreign-but not domestic-firms to skip state and federal courts to challenge state laws, regulations, and administrative and judicial decisions in private international tribunals;

WHEREAS foreign investors have already used NAFTA's ISDS provisions to challenge local building permits, bans on toxic chemicals, and the decisions of state court, and to chill proposed legislation on tobacco control;

WHEREAS the working people of the United States cannot afford another trade agreement that hollows out our industrial base, drives down wages, and adds to our substantial trade deficit;

WHEREAS promoting economic growth with equity in Saint Paul requires an approach that reforms the entire trade negotiation process to ensure that voices of workers, farmers, small businesses, families, and communities are heard and their interests addressed;

WHEREAS traditional "fast-track" trade negotiating authority has effectively shut state and local governments out of the process, limiting our ability to influence the discussions to ensure the City of Saint Paul can participate in the benefits of trade;

WHEREAS traditional "fast-track" trade negotiating authority ensures that negotiations occur behind closed doors, with minimal transparency, empowering the privileged lobbyists while ignoring traditional democratic, participatory rule and law-making processes;

WHEREAS traditional "fast-track" trade negotiating authority limits the opportunity for states and their citizens to correct shortcomings in the negotiation process by not making the text public until it is final and can no longer be improved;

WHEREAS traditional "fast-track" trade negotiating authority prohibits amendments to trade deals and their underlying legislation and strictly limits the time allowed for congressional debate;

WHEREAS traditional "fast-track" trade negotiating authority hands too much power to the executive branch to negotiate any trade deal it wants, then require a yes-or-no vote on it within 90 days, with no ability to amend it or delay it;

WHEREAS traditional "fast-track" trade negotiating authority does not provide citizens with adequate time to read and form opinions about the typically thousand page trade deals before Congress is required to vote;

WHEREAS the people of the City of Saint Paul have the best chance to benefit from pending trade and investment agreements only if the process by which they are negotiated undergoes a transformation to make the process open, fair and inclusive;

AND WHEREAS repeating old mistakes in negotiating new trade agreements would be a tragic missed opportunity to create jobs, strengthen our economy, reduce income inequality, and promote sustainable growth;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Saint Paul City Council calls upon our elected officials in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives to oppose "*Fast Track*" legislation that would keep trade policy-making behind closed doors and would otherwise fail to restructure the misguided and failed trade negotiating policies of the past;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Saint Paul City Council calls upon our elected officials in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives to ensure that state and local elected officials have robust opportunities to participate in developing a new trade negotiating authority and to avoid mistakes of the past;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT a copy of this resolution will be sent to our elected officials in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives;

AND BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT the Saint Paul City Council calls upon our elected officials in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives to support new trade negotiating authority only if it will:

· Protect and promote traditional state prerogatives and authority under our federal system,

including providing opt-in rights for states with respect to procurement and service sector commitments;

- Ensure that Congress can approve trade agreement partners before trade negotiations begin;
- Create trade negotiating objectives that are specific to the trade partners involved;
- Advance trade rules that provides balanced, inclusive benefits across states and communities;
- To preserve the balance of powers, ensure that Congress, rather than the executive branch, determines whether trade negotiating objectives have been met and whether trade agreements qualify for expedited consideration;
- To preserve the separation of powers, ensure Congress has effective opportunities to strip expedited consideration provisions from trade deals that fail to meet trade negotiating objectives or that fail to incorporate adequate Congressional and public participation;
- Increase access to U.S. trade policy making, trade proposals, and negotiating text for elected state officials and members of the public; and
- Reform failed trade policies that have cost American jobs, devastated manufacturing communities, and impinged on traditional state powers.