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# The Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

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### **What is TPA?**

Trade Promotion Authority—or TPA—is a partnership between Congress and the administration that helps secure the most effective trade agreements possible. It has three main components: a list of congressionally-prescribed negotiating objectives that sets priorities for the administration to follow; robust consultation and transparency requirements that give Congress adequate oversight of negotiations and give the public a full understanding of what an agreement would mean; and a streamlined procedure to vote on a trade agreement if the administration meets its TPA obligations.

### **Why is TPA needed?**

TPA is the key to securing job-creating trade agreements that help American workers and ensure the United States is writing the rules of the global economy. It creates a united front between Congress and the president so that an administration can reach the best agreement possible. TPA also guarantees accountability, transparency, and enforceability from the administration as it negotiates trade deals and Congress considers them.

### **How does TPA improve trade agreements?**

Before making their best offers, our negotiating partners need to know that Congress will not re-write a trade agreement. Under TPA, Congress sets negotiating priorities and consultation requirements, and then provides an up-or-down vote if an administration meets them, so other nations can be confident that if they agree to a deal, the United States won't go back on its word.

### **Does TPA give new power to the president?**

No. Since 1974, every president has had TPA. In reality, TPA empowers Congress to demand accountability from the administration. The president already has the constitutional authority to negotiate a trade agreement. But only Congress can change U.S. law. So TPA ensures that Congress is playing a major role throughout negotiations, not just at the end.

### **How does TPA empower Congress?**

TPA provides the rules of the road for the administration as it negotiates with our trading partners. TPA includes 150 clear and ambitious negotiating objectives that set the priorities of any negotiation. TPA also requires the administration to consult with Congress throughout the negotiating process. Without TPA, there would be few guidelines and little accountability for the administration as it negotiates with other countries.

### **What consultation and transparency protections does TPA provide?**

This new version of TPA includes unprecedented consultation and transparency provisions. Any member of Congress can review the latest negotiating text and personally attend negotiating rounds. TPA requires the administration to brief any member who asks on the status of negotiations. It also includes robust reporting requirements on the effects of a trade agreement and makes those reports public. And TPA lays out a timeframe for congressional action once an agreement is complete that allows the American people to learn what the agreement would do before Congress votes.

### **What happens if the administration doesn't meet its obligations under TPA?**

There's an off switch. If the administration falls short, Congress has the ability to turn off TPA protections and remove the streamlined voting procedures. In fact, this new version of TPA includes yet another layer of accountability, providing an additional process in which the House and Senate can separately turn off TPA if necessary.

### **How does TPA affect U.S. sovereignty?**

It doesn't. TPA includes language that reaffirms that Congress—and only Congress—can change U.S. law. And no trade agreement can go into force without congressional approval.

### **What does trade mean for America?**

More jobs. Higher wages. And American leadership in the global economy. More than 38 million American jobs—one in five of all U.S. jobs—are tied to trade. And those jobs pay higher wages—on average, 18 percent higher. Trade agreements make sure that American workers are able to compete on a level playing field, where we know they can thrive. At the same time, trade agreements help to ensure that the United States—not countries like China—is writing the rules in the global economy.