

THE DAILY COURIER

- LOCAL MATTERS -

Letter: TransPacific Partnership

Editor,

There is a new 'free' trade agreement being pushed by politicians in Washington. This agreement, among other things, will expand powers of foreign corporations to bring suits against sovereign nations. Such lawsuits are not heard by the courts of the state in which they are brought, but rather by a tribunal of three private corporate attorneys.

This new trade agreement, the TransPacific Partnership (TPP), is currently under negotiation by 12 countries. The TPP has been dubbed "NAFTA on steroids," and this agreement is being negotiated behind closed doors, with Congress being left out and private corporate attorneys allowed in. This trade agreement has bipartisan support, with President Obama, numerous Democrats and most Republicans supporting it.

Thankfully, parts of the proposed agreement have been leaked to the public. As it turns out, the TPP isn't much of a trade deal, as only five of the 29 chapters actually deal with trade. A particular provision may make "Buy American" policies illegal.

There is language that may enable SOPA-like policies, which could restrict internet freedoms and access. This secretive deal could possibly allow for foreign corporations to sue the U.S. for protecting our food and water resources, among other things. Former U.S. trade representative Ron Kirk stated that if the public knew what was in the TPP it would never pass.

It's disappointing, though not surprising to see one of the rare times the two parties work across the aisle is done so to cater to the business class. If this deal is going to be good for "We the People," why is it being kept secret?

If you would like to learn more, the conservative CATO Institute and the liberal organization Public Citizen teamed up to write a piece. You can read it at <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/238843-special-courts-for-foreign-investors>.

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