



San Antonio Alamo Area Local Legislative Updates



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Reported Collapse of U.S.-Europe Trade Talks

News out of Germany that U.S. trade negotiations with Europe similar to the one that produced the Trans-Pacific Partnership have collapsed. The trade deal is called the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP. It is being negotiated between the U.S. and the members of the European Union. Discussions have been going on at the same time the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a 12-nation deal that includes several Asian countries as well as Western Hemisphere nations, was being forged.

In an article by Britain's Independent quotes Germany's Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel as saying free trade negotiations between the European Union and the United States have failed, but that "nobody is really admitting it." According to Gabriel, who also serves as his country's economy minister, negotiators from the European Union and United States have failed -- despite 14 rounds of talks -- to align on any item out of 27 chapters being discussed. Gabriel and his ministry are not directly involved in the negotiations.

EU officials were quick to downplay Sigmar's statement, saying they hoped to "close this deal by the end of the year." But Gabriel isn't the first to cry foul on the TTIP, which, if enacted, would establish the world's largest free trade zone between the United States and the EU's 28 member states. In May, French negotiators threatened to block the agreement. U.S. negotiators have also reportedly been angry over the passage of a similar agreement between Canada and the EU, which included protections U.S. negotiators don't want included in the TTIP.

The TTIP news comes on the heels of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) saying that the Senate would not vote on the TPP in the upcoming lame-duck session of Congress. (The Obama administration countered, saying it still hopes to pass the deal before the next president takes office.)

Both trade announcements follow years of protests on each side of the Atlantic to fight the TTIP and the TPP, especially from unions and environmental groups.

While the TPP has become a lightning rod for labor and other progressive organizations in the United States, the TTIP has slipped mostly under the radar stateside. That's partially because talks over it, which began in 2013, have taken place almost entirely behind closed doors. Among the proposals unearthed are provisions to open European public services to U.S. businesses and to scale back online privacy protections. European groups have also raised the concern that the deal could send jobs from their continent to the United States, where trade unions and labor protections are weaker than in the EU.

Like the TPP, the TTIP would dismantle regulations in areas like banking and the environment by limiting governments' ability to impose rules on transnational corporations. Both trade deals would

further allow the investor-state dispute settlement system, which permits corporations to sue states. (TransCanada Corp. -- the Canadian company behind the now-defunct Keystone XL oil pipeline -- is currently seeking \$15 billion from Washington under a similar NAFTA provision for rejecting the controversial project.)

"The fact that TTIP has failed is testament to the hundreds of thousands of people who took to the streets to protest against it, the three million people who signed a petition calling for it to be scrapped, and the huge coalition of civil society groups, trade unions, progressive politicians and activists who came together to stop it," writes Kevin Smith of Global Justice Now, an organization that has worked to fight TTIP in the United Kingdom.

Beyond progressive organizations' fold, though, lies a growing bipartisan resentment of NAFTA-style deals. This sets a global stage for redoing how trade deals are negotiated – not in back rooms by a handful of corporate lobbyists, but in an open process involving all of the stakeholders who are affected by global trade, and who care about how workers, consumers and the environment are affected by the terms of global trade.

