either do not exist or are not enforced. Under NAFTA, food imports from Mexico and Canada have dramatically overburdened the Food and Drug Administration's ability to adequately inspect food imports. More and more we hear of illnesses caused from foreign foods. We need to make international bodies and foreign governments with weaker standards accountable if we are to protect the health of all Americans. Granting fast track authority will only threaten the safety of our food supply.

As a respesentative from the Corn Belt, I understand our farmers are struggling through tough times with commodity prices that are the lowest they've been in years. However, trade negotiations take years. Our farmers need immediate relief. We should be looking at ways to put money in their pockets where they most need it and ways to help our trading partners get back on their economic feet. Fast track is not the cure-all to the farm crisis, it is, at the moment, a distraction.

Without labor, food safety, and environmental provisions in the fast track legislation, we have no guarantee that these issues will ever be addressed. I am not willing to risk the health and safety of my constituents on an authority that cannot safeguard their well-being. Let fix the problems we have with unfair trade negotiations; let not add to them. I urge all my colleagues to vote no on fast track.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in reluctant opposition to fast track. Last year I strongly supported a similar fast track proposal, and I continue to believe that the fast track mechanism is necessary to ensure that new trade agreements don't become loaded up with special interest provisions in the normal legislative process.

But I simply cannot support legislation that is being brought to the House floor for blatantly political purposes, to divide Democrats less than two months before an election. And I do not think it is appropriate to tie the President's hands at the negotiating table—to a much greater extent than Democratic Congresses tied the hands of President's Reagan and Bush—when the Administration is not involved in the process.

It's clear that the Republican majority is not serious about passing this bill. Last year, members from both parties worked together to generate for fast track. This year, the majority made no effort to collaborate with the minority. This unwillingness to approach Democratic supporters of fast track exposes the Republican majority's true motivations—to score political points, not to pass the legislation.

It is irresponsible to bring up fast track knowing that it's going to fail. This will make it even more difficult to pass next year, and send an unfortunate signal to the international community that the United States does not want to remain engaged in the global economy. Such a signal couldn't come at a worse time, given the financial turmoil in Russia and parts of Asia.

International trade is clearly good for the American economy. Since 1992, almost 40 percent of our nation's total economic growth has been the direct result in international trade. Companies involved in exporting have expanded employment nearly 20 percent faster than firms serving only domestic markets, and jobs related to exports pay about 15 percent above the national average. New trade agreements—completed with fast track authority—would extend the benefits of trade to even more workers, consumers and companies.

But our trade policy—like foreign policy in general—must be based on bipartisan cooperation and consensus, not partisan politics. For that reason—and that reason alone—I intend to oppose this fast track legislation.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 2621, a bill to allow fast track procedures for trade agreements. NAFTA is a recent example of why Congress should not approve this fast track authority.

NAFTA proves that trade agreements do not necessarily beneift all workers. Our experience with NAFTA demonstrates that ''side agreements'' are not enforceable and labor, the environment and public safety are all at risk. Large corporations benefit from trade agreements like NAFTA. NAFTA enables these companies to exploit our most valuable resources for their own bottom line. For these reasons, I vehemently oppose granting fast track negotiating authority to the president.

In any trade agreement, the people deserve to know—and have us debate—the terms of trade expension. I am not satisfied that the terms before us in this fast track authority are satisfactory and I am certain that the benefit doesn't go to the workers in my district.

Estimates show that the number of jobs foregone in the U.S. because of NAFTA-induced imports is over 400,000. In my home state of California, 38,406 jobs were lost directly because of NAFTA, according to a narrow Commerce Department formula. This is nearly 10 percent of the total U.S. jobs lost because of NAFTA. Workers in California qualify for a significant portion of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)—California is one of the top six states where the most workers are certified for TAA.

Multinational corporations export not only products but also business operations cross the border; they exploit Mexican workers for a fraction of the United States labor costs. American workers lose decent paying jobs. Mexican workers get work with subsistence wages. The corporations benefit at the expense of human labor.

There are 981,302 Mexicans working in abhorrent conditions in Maquiladoras, making an average wage of $30–$35 for a 48 hour week as a direct result of NAFTA. These workers live in shacks made of cardboard and wood. I cannot grant a fast track trade negotiating authority if fair labor practices will not be protected.

The environmental loses through NAFTA as well. The Administration promised greater environmental protections along the border regions where industry was expected to grow as a result of NAFTA. Well, we have experienced greater industry growth along the Southern borbers, but as far as environmental protection goes, it was just another promise broken.

Hazardous waste coming into the United States increased 30 percent in 1995. In that same year, well water in U.S. border communities had sulfate concentrations of nearly twice what is considered safe for drinking water. Not only does the U.S. laborer lose through NAFTA, but so does the vulnerable child and grandparent who drinks polluted well water.

NAFTA does not ensure inspection standards for produce, agriculture and livistock. NAFTA has crippled border inspections and the U.S. does not have the manpower to inspect everything that comes across its borders. Frozen fruit imports have increased by 45 percent and frozen vegetable by 31 percent since NAFTA, but there has been no increase in inspection.

A 1997 GAO report shows that commercial passenger vehicles from Mexico are not being inspected regularly. The ones that have been inspected have been placed out of service for serious safety violations such as steering or brake problems, according to the Federal Highway Administration. Fifty-four percent of the commercial passenger vehicles that pass through our southern borders do so through California. These unsafe vehicles are endangering the passengers as well as the safety of those on the streets and highways of California.

Negotiating authority with the right terms-allowing US workers to share in the benefit and promoting economic growth in environmentally sound ways worldwide—is my bottom line. Without that before us, I will vote ''no'' on the Reciprocal Trade Agreement Authorities Act of 1997.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, today, the House is asked to vote to approve H.R. 2621, a fast-track procedure under which international agreements might be approved as far into the future as October 1, 2005. The ''fast track'' procedure requires the President to submit draft international agreements, implementing legislation, and a statement of administrative action for congressional approval. Amendments to the legislation in Congress are not permitted once the bill is introduced and committee and floor action votes may consist only of ''yes'' or ''no'' votes on any potential agreement as it is introduced.

The fast-track procedure bill, in addition to creating an extra-constitutional procedure by which international agreements become ratified, sets general international economic policy objectives, re-authorizes ''Trade Adjustment Assistance'' welfare for workers who lose their jobs and for businesses which fail, and creates a new permanent position of Chief Agriculture Negotiator within the office of the United States Trade representative. The bill would reestablish the President's extra-constitutional ''executive authority'' to negotiate ''side agreements'' such as those dealing with environmental and labor issues. Lastly, the bill ''pays'' the government's ''cost'' of free trade by increasing taxes on a number of businesses which recently benefitted by a favorable judgment in federal tax court.

The Constitution clearly allows for international agreements and clearly specifies the means by which they are to be accomplished. Treaties, quite clearly are to be negotiated by the President with advice and consent of the Senate and can only become effective upon being ratified by a two-thirds majority of the Senate. The Constitution, however, does not expressly confer authority to make international agreements other than by treaties and, of course, the tenth amendment specifies that ''powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States, respectively, or to the people.'' To ignore or allow the one branch of the federal government to delegate it's powers to others destroys the liberty-protecting ability inherent to the Constitutional separation of powers.

Congress does have, amongst its enumerated powers, regulation of commerce with foreign nations. Imposing import tariffs, quotas, and embargoes, however economically detrimental to the macro economy of the United

States, are, at least, amongst powers delegated to Congress by Article I of the Constitution. Regulating commerce, of course, refers to enacting domestic laws which effect voluntary exchanges between trading partners who happen to be citizens of different governments. International agreements between the governments of those trading partners cannot be construed to escape the stringent treaty ratification process established by the document's framers just by suggesting Congress has the power to enact domestic regulation regarding foreign commerce. If this were an allowable justification for bypassing the constitutionally-mandated treaty process, Article I Congressional powers would almost completely undermine the necessity for the Constitutionally-mandated treaty process. Treaties regarding everything from international monetary policy to military policy would suddenly become ''ripe'' for the ''treaty-making'' power of the President and Congress. Instead, a bright line process exists whereby entering into agreements with foreign nations under which the U.S. government will do ''X'' if the government of Ruritania does ''Y'' must be understood to constitute an international agreement and, as such, require the more restrictive treaty process.

Moreover, because international courts regard ''treaties'' and ''agreements'' as equally binding on signatory governments, a stronger case is made that they must be made subject to the same constitutional process. Insofar as H.R. 2621 ignores the lake of a congressional role in the international treaty process and instead attempts to make Congress an integral part of a procedure for which it lacks any constitutional authority, this bill can be opposed on constitutional grounds alone.

Even if the procedure advocated by the bill were able to survive what should always be the Congressman's initial threshold of constitutionality, the bill contains provisions which will likely continue our country down the ugly path of internationally-engineered, ''managed trade'' rather than that of free trade. As explained by economist Murray N. Rothbard:

[G]enuine free trade doesn't require a treaty (or its deformed cousin, a 'trade agreement'; NAFTA is called an agreement so it can avoid the constitutional requirement of approval by two-thirds of the Senate). If the establishment truly wants free trade, all it has to do is to repeal our numerous tariffs, import quotas, anti-dumping laws, and other American-imposed restrictions of free trade. No foreign policy or foreign maneuvering is necessary.

In truth, the bipartisan establishment's fanfare of ''free trade'' fosters the opposite of genuine freedom of exchange. Whereas genuine free traders examine free markets from the perspective of the consumer (each individual), the mercantilist examines trade from the perspective of the power elite; in other words, from the perspective of the big business in concert with big government. Genuine free traders consider exports a means of paying for imports, in the same way that goods in general are produced in order to be sold to consumers. But the mercantilists want to privilege the government business elite at the expense of all consumers, be they domestic or foreign.

Fast track is merely a procedure under which the United States can more quickly integrate and cartelize government in order to entrench the interventionist mixed economy. In Europe, this process culminated in the Maastricht Treaty, the attempt to impose a single currency and central bank and force relatively free economies to ratchet up their regulatory and welfare states. In the United States, it has instead taken the form of transferring legislative and judicial authority from states and localities and to the executive branch of the federal government. Thus, agreements negotiated under fast track authority (like NAFTA) are, in essence, the same alluring means by which the socialist Eurocrats have tried to get Europeans to surrender to the super-statism of the European community. And just as Brussels has forced low-tax European countries to raise their taxes to the European average or to expand their respective welfare states in the name of ''fairness,'' a ''level playing field,'' and ''upward harmonization,'' so too will the international trade governors and commissions be empowered to ''upwardly harmonize,'' internationalize, and otherwise usurp laws of American state governments.

The harmonization language in last year's FDA reform bill constitutes a perfect example. Harmonization language in this bill has the Health and Human Services Secretary negotiating multilateral and bilateral international agreements to unify regulations in this country with those of others. The bill removes from the state governments the right to exercise their police powers under the tenth amendment to the constitution and, at the same time, creates or corporatist power elite board of directors to review medical devices and drugs for approval. This board, of course, is to be made up of ''objective'' industry experts appointed by national governments. Instead of the ''national'' variety, known as the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 (enacted for the ''good reason'' of protecting railroad consumers from exploitative railroad freight rates, only to be staffed by railroad attorneys who then used their positions to line the pockets of their respective railroads), we now have the same sham imposed upon worldwide consumers on an international scale soon to be staffed by heads of multilateral pharmaceutical corporations.

Lastly, critics of the bill convincingly argue that language within H.R. 2621 regarding ''Foreign Investment'' would establish new rights for foreign investors and corporations and new obligations for the United States. H.R. 2621 attempts to eliminate artificial or trade-distorting barriers to trade-related foreign investment by reducing or eliminating exceptions to the principle of national treatment; free the transfer of funds relating to investments; reduce or eliminate performance requirements and other unreasonable barriers to the establishment and operation of investments; seeks to establish standards for expropriation and compensation for expropriation, consistent with United States legal principles and practice; and provide meaningful procedures for resolving investment disputes. It is argued that H.R. 2621 will congressionally activate the nearly completed Multilateral Agreement on Investment which covers 29 countries and forbids countries from regulating investment or capital flows and would establish new rights for foreign investors and corporations and new obligations for the United States. The MAI requires governments to pay investors for any action that directly or indirectly has an equivalent effect of expropriation. The MAI would be enforceable through international tribunals similar to those of the World Trade Organization without the due process protections of the United States.

Because H.R. 2621 enacts an unconstitutional foreign policy procedure, furthers our nation down the internationally-managed (rather than free trade) path, sets general international economic policy objectives, re-authorizes ''Trade Adjustment Assistance'' welfare for workers who lose their jobs and for businesses which fail, potentially undermines U.S. sovereignty through MAI, and preserves the President's executive authority to negotiate ''side agreements.'' As such, I must oppose the bill.

Ms. DEGETTE. Mr. Speaker, after close review of this legislation, I have decided to oppose the ''Reciprocal Trade Agreement Authorities Act'' otherwise known as fast track trading authority. This proposal includes environmental, labor, and food safety standards as merely negotiating objectives, without any accompanying legislation or side agreements that directly address these issues. My greatest concern is that the health and safety of American families will be jeopardized in future trade accords if these issues are not made a much higher priority.

I believe that free trade is good for our economy. There are, however, certain precautions that need to be taken to ensure that free trade agreements do not undermine other principles that our country holds dear, such as a clean environment. One of the potential problems with trade agreements is that they create pressure on neighboring governments to relax environmental regulations in an effort to lure manufacturers across borders, thereby allowing these companies to profit by polluting and abusing natural resources. Congress must also make sure that there are sufficient labor protections when we make our trade agreements so that we can protect against multinational corporations moving production to other countries with lower labor costs. Lastly, we need to make sure that our trade agreements do not compromise our food safety standards. This is a real threat, particularly to our children who are often more severely affected by contaminated food than adults.

I am a proponent of free trade; I am as even stronger proponent of fair trade. Our priority should be to forge a sound trade policy that helps, not hurts, the working people of this country. While we address our concerns, we can still achieve strong free trade accords. The Executive branch has negotiated hundreds of agreements without the benefit of fast track, and will continue to do so if fast track authority is not renewed.

In my view, the administration's latest set of initiatives to protect labor and environmental issues in trade agreements are insufficient. If these issues are truly a priority, I believe the administration would have worked more aggressively to include them earlier on, instead of presenting a few feeble objectives in the eleventh hour of this debate. The new initiatives to make World Trade Organization activities, such as the settlement of international trade disputes, more open to the public, and to issue reports on worker conditions in other countries might prove valuable but they certainly do not offer enforceable protections. We must insist on negotiating authority that ensures trade pacts contain enforceable food safety, environmental, and labor provisions.