



NAFTA RENEGOTIATION

ACTIVIST TOOLKIT



FEBRUARY 2017



Taina Asili y La Band Rebelde at the Boston Rock Against the TPP Concert. Photo Credit: Jamie Okeefe

Sierra Club trade activists have played a critical role in the fight against the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the corporate status-quo that has plagued a generation of trade deals. Together, we sent hundreds of thousands of emails and made tens of thousands of calls to Congress; cosponsored the [Rock Against the TPP](#) concert series; worked alongside labor, public health, and racial justice allies to toxify the TPP; and organized in over a dozen Congressional districts to #StopTPP.

On top of that, Sierra Club supporters submitted dozens of Letters to the Editor (LTEs) and opinion pieces to local newspapers, held lobby meetings with Members of Congress in both their districts and in Washington, DC, and educated countless community members through regional presentations and workshops. Ultimately, this progressive opposition prevented the number of votes needed for passage of the TPP in Congress from ever materializing.

Seizing upon this opposition, Donald Trump made overhauling status-quo trade policy a key part of his campaign, and we expect that trade policy will be a priority for his Administration. Trump has pledged, for example, to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and negotiate new bilateral deals. But, Trump's trade agenda will surely not be based in concern for communities and our climate.

That is why, now more than ever, we must prevent Trump's false solutions from filling the trade vacuum left behind by the TPP's demise. We must offer our [people-powered alternative](#) — one that is rooted in fighting inequality, respecting workers' rights, fostering healthy communities, and seeking climate justice. For every deal that the Trump Administration delivers that fails to reflect these broadly-shared priorities, we will work with our labor, health, consumer, and other allies to ensure that each deal meets the same fate as the TPP. Rather, we believe a trade reset must involve a new [Climate-Friendly Approach to Trade](#).

Thank you for your interest in joining this fight for a new approach to trade. This toolkit is focused on both building support for a new, climate-friendly approach to trade and on influencing one key pillar of Trump's trade agenda: the renegotiation of NAFTA. This toolkit should provide a blueprint for educating yourself and your community about the need for a new approach to trade, engaging your policymakers, and reaching the media in this effort. Throughout this document, you will find new educational materials and concrete tools that will help you to organize your own community presentation or workshop, to set up a meeting with your Member of Congress, and to draft and publish your own Letter to the Editor on a just and equitable replacement of NAFTA.

If you have any questions or need any help with our toolkit, please reach out to our Responsible Trade Campaign Representative Anthony Torres at anthony.torres@sierraclub.org.

KEY DOCUMENTS:

- **LTE Template** — Here is a template you can use to model your own Letter to the Editor with a focus on the upcoming battle over NAFTA renegotiation: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Nnos2CDBcYWWaX8am4QcOnr-WU834BPYTein6EyUGfQU/edit>
- **Petition to Congress** — Here is a petition on NAFTA you can sign and share: <https://sierra.secure.force.com/actions/National?actionId=AR0066474>



No TPP Fast Tracks Signs at the People's Climate March in New York

- **Message Box** — Here is guidance on messaging to help you prepare for speaking to the media or your community: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1lvxYy4LI07X3N5CRuE5C5fOrFptIL7XyU-AB5H1eSRTQ/edit?ts=58812dd2#slide=id.gb4c-3b97a_30..
- **NAFTA Talking Points** — Here is helpful messaging to review before you speaking to your community or policymaker: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gN0uWAUNzFgdIBZLBkrAurah-JwBPVZjIFcO_0ayvSE/edit?userstoinvite=llana.Solomon@sierraclub.org&ts=58890ad7
- **Shareable Graphics and Tweets:**
 - Retweet: <https://twitter.com/SierraClub/status/824664453610405890>
 - Share on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SierraClub/posts/10154451363612572>



I. REPLACING NAFTA: EIGHT ESSENTIAL CHANGES

For more than two decades, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has harmed communities across Canada, Mexico, and the U.S.—particularly people of color and lower income families — by undermining environmental protections, eliminating jobs, increasing air and water pollution, eroding wages, and fueling climate change. Widespread public opposition to such trade deals has swelled.

As a leading environmental organization, the Sierra Club has long called for a fundamentally different approach to trade — one that prioritizes the needs of people and planet. Thus, our basis for evaluating any NAFTA renegotiation is clear: Does it support — not undermine — a more stable climate, clean air and water, healthy communities, Indigenous peoples, and good jobs? If a deal is delivered that fails to reflect these broadly-shared priorities, we will work with our labor, health, consumer, family farm, and other allies to ensure that it meets the same fate as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

To transform NAFTA from a polluter-friendly deal into one that supports environmental protection, any renegotiation must at a minimum, incorporate these [eight demands](#):

- 1. Eliminate rules that empower corporations to attack environmental and public health protections in unaccountable tribunals.** NAFTA's investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) system has empowered multinational corporations like ExxonMobil and TransCanada to bypass our courts, use private tribunals, and demand money from taxpayers for policies that affect corporate

bottom lines. Corporations have used NAFTA to challenge bans on toxic chemicals, the decisions of environmental review panels, and protections for our climate. They have extracted more than \$370 million from governments in these cases, while pending NAFTA claims total more than \$50 billion. The cases are heard not by judges but by corporate lawyers outside the normal court system. Broad corporate rights, including ISDS, must be eliminated from NAFTA to safeguard our right to democratically determine our own public interest protections.

- 2. Add strong, enforceable environmental and labor standards.** NAFTA's weak and unenforceable environmental and labor side agreements facilitated a race to the bottom in which corporations could offshore jobs to exploit lower environmental and labor standards in another country. Any deal that replaces NAFTA must create a fair playing field by requiring each participating country to adopt, maintain, and implement policies to fulfill important international environmental and labor agreements, including the Paris climate agreement, and treaties protecting Indigenous rights. In addition, each country must be required to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies, which encourage climate pollution while distorting trade. These commitments must be included in the core text of the agreement and made enforceable via an independent dispute settlement process in which trade sanctions are used to correct labor and environmental abuses.
- 3. Safeguard energy sector regulation by overhauling overreaching rules.** NAFTA's energy chapter limits Canada's ability to restrict production of climate-polluting fossil fuels such as tar sands oil. The chapter, written before awareness of climate change was widespread, must be eliminated. Other NAFTA rules allow renewable portfolio standards, low-carbon fuel standards, and other climate-friendly energy regulations to be challenged for impeding business for foreign fossil fuel firms. Such rules must be narrowed to protect climate policies in each country.
- 4. Restrict pollution from cross-border motor carriers.** NAFTA encouraged a rise in cross-border motor carrier traffic without doing anything to mitigate the resulting increase in harmful vehicle

emissions. Any deal that replaces NAFTA must require cross-border motor carriers to reduce emissions in order for their goods to benefit from reduced tariffs. In addition, all cross-border commercial vehicles must be required to comply with all state and federal standards to limit pollution.

- 5. Require green government purchasing instead of restricting it.** NAFTA's procurement rules limit governments' ability to use "green purchasing" requirements that ensure government contracts support renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable goods. NAFTA's replacement must require signatory governments to include a preference for goods and services with low environmental impacts in procurement decisions.
- 6. Bolster climate protections by penalizing imported goods made with high climate emissions.** NAFTA allows firms to shift production to a country with lower climate standards, which can spur "carbon leakage" and job offshoring. To prevent this, and encourage greater climate action from high-emissions trading partners, each country must be required to impose a border tax on imported goods made with significant climate pollution.
- 7. Require governments to prioritize policies that minimize climate pollution.** While NAFTA restricts climate policies that limit trade or investment, any replacement deal must instead put climate first. This includes requiring governments to use a "climate impact test" for policymaking, in which potential climate impacts of policy proposals are reported and weighed.
- 8. Add a broad protection for environmental and other public interest policies.** NAFTA's many overreaching rules restrict the policy tools that governments can use to protect the environment and other broadly-shared priorities. NAFTA includes no provision that effectively shields public interest policies from such rules — only a weak "exception" that has consistently failed to protect challenged policies. Instead, any deal that replaces NAFTA must include a broad "carve-out" that exempts public interest policies from all of the deal's rules.



II. EDUCATE YOUR COMMUNITY

Educating your community about a new approach to trade and what must be included and excluded from a NAFTA renegotiation is essential to getting people involved in the fight to transform trade. Educational events can be a great introduction. Below you will find helpful information on how to educate your community.

Host a community event on the climate-friendly approach to trade and renegotiation of NAFTA:

Hosting an event is a great way to spread the word about the new approach. Here are some simple steps to hosting a successful community event:

IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

Identify an audience that you think would be interested in learning about a new progressive vision for trade. In addition to collaborating with friends and neighbors, you can also work with existing social networks to set up your event. Some possibilities of potential audiences/venues include:

- Your local Sierra Club chapter
- Student organizations

- Service groups
- Your community center
- Your workplace
- Your local library
- Having your friends, neighbors, and colleagues over for a potluck

SET UP A TIME AND LOCATION FOR YOUR EVENT

Call your location of choice and ask to speak to the person who handles outside speakers. Be ready to pitch why you think a presentation on the climate-friendly approach to trade and NAFTA renegotiation is relevant to the members of this group/venue. Identify a date and a time that works for both you and the organization.

PREPARE AND PRACTICE YOUR PRESENTATION

Make sure to practice your presentation before giving the final talk. Practicing your presentation for friends or family is a great way to get over any public speaking nerves! When reviewing your presentation, try to anticipate questions that your audience might have and adapt your presentation accordingly.

PRESENT AT YOUR EVENT

On the day of the event, you should arrive at least 15 minutes early to set up the room and make sure everything is in order. Because one of your main goals is to educate your community, it's a good idea to bring handouts and background materials, as well as fliers for other upcoming trade events. You can either pass out these materials to people as they enter or display them prominently on a table in the room. You should also print out a sign-up sheet for people who are interested in participating in future trade rallies or events.

Deliver your presentation — ideally in 15 minutes or less — and take questions from the audience. After the presentation and the questions conclude, make sure you stick around and engage anyone who wants to talk about the new approach to trade in greater detail.



FOLLOW UP

- 1. Contact and thank the venue/organization that hosted your event:** Also, take the time to follow up with people who asked to be contacted.
- 2. Create or join a trade group/committee:** Creating or joining a trade group is a great way to strategize with like-minded folks about a progressive trade vision.
- 3. Share resources:** Share materials, resources, and information online to help spread awareness about dangerous trade agreements.

MATERIALS

- **Powerpoint Slideshow** — Here is a presentation you can use in or adapt for your event: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1G_pHx-7bECkAC9C0yIAHA9BuXtZXm1UumHUbTcTB-FUp4/edit#slide=id.p9
- **NAFTA Talking points** — Here is a guide you can use when speaking before your community: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gNOu-WAUNzFgdIBZLBkrAurah-JwBPVZjIFcO_0ay-vSE/edit?userstoinvite=Ilana.Solomon@sierraclub.org&ts=58890ad7
- **Climate-Friendly Approach to Trade Factsheet:** <https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/uploads-wysiwig/%23transform-trade%20fact%20sheet.pdf>
- **Climate-Friendly Approach to Trade Discussion Paper:** <http://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/uploads-wysiwig/climate-friend-ly-trade-model.pdf>
- **Op Ed: After TPP, Here's a Progressive Vision for Trade:** http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ilana-solomon/after-the-tpp-heres-a-pro_b_13014922.html



III. ENGAGE POLICYMAKERS

Engaging your Members of Congress (Representatives or Senators) is essential to advancing a progressive vision for trade and ensuring a NAFTA replacement based on healthy communities.

You can find out who your Representative is by visiting the webpages <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find> and <http://www.senate.gov/senators/contact>. Below you will find three key ways to engage your Members of Congress.

1. **Sign and share our petition:** Renegotiation of NAFTA must benefit people and our climate, not multinational corporations. <https://sierra.secure.force.com/actions/National?actionId=AR0066474>
2. **Ask a question at a town hall:** Members of Congress often host public forums with constituents. Getting them on public record with a trade-related question can be a very effective way of holding them accountable and building

public pressure. Follow this list of updated town hall meetings and find your Member of Congress: <https://townhallproject.com>

Here's a great sample question to ask your Member at a Town Hall:

The template for trade deals like NAFTA was written decades ago under the advisement of fossil fuel and other corporations. These deals serve one function: to boost corporate profits. They even empower corporations to sue governments in private trade tribunals over climate and other protections that affect corporate bottom lines. Trump has pledged to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), but, I'm deeply concerned that his renegotiation will not be

based in concern for communities and our climate. My basis for evaluating any NAFTA renegotiation is clear: Does it support — not undermine — a more stable climate, clean air and water, healthy communities, and good union jobs? Will you commit to opposing any renegotiation of NAFTA that fails to meet this standard? More specifically, will you call for any renegotiation of NAFTA to exclude broad rights for investors, including the investor state dispute settlement system, and include a carve-out that exempts public interest and environmental policies from all of the deal's rules?

3. Write a letter to your Members of Congress:

Writing a letter is a great way to engage your Representatives and Senators. Members like hearing from their constituents about issues that will affect their livelihoods, and writing a personalized letter is one of the best ways to express your opinion to your Members. If you can take the time to handwrite a letter, that is ideal, though emailed or typed letters are also great. Here are key tips for writing a letter to your Member of Congress:

ADDRESSING THE LETTER TO YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

*The Honorable (full name)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515
DATE
Dear Representative (last name):*

ADDRESSING THE LETTER TO YOUR SENATORS

*The Honorable (full name)
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20515
DATE
Dear Senator (last name):*

LETTER CONTENT TIPS

- Let your Member know you are a constituent. In your letter, clearly state early on that you're a constituent in your member's district. Members are more likely to engage with you if you are their constituent.
- Make sure to state your reason for writing in the opening paragraph.

We suggest you urge your members of Congress to publicly support at least these three points, plus any others that you feel are particularly important.

- A transparent negotiation process, with public texts, that invites the U.S. public and Congress to help formulate U.S. positions and to comment on negotiated texts after each negotiating round.
- Removing broad investor rights, including ISDS.
- Including strong and binding labor and environmental provisions, including a requirement to adopt policies to fulfill the Paris climate agreement, subject to an independent dispute settlement process.
- Personalized letters are more effective than utilizing pre-written templates.
- Keep your comments brief; we suggest letters that are one page or shorter.
- Be specific.
- Explain how trade affects you and, if possible, how it impacts your community and/or state.
- Be courteous and respectful in all communications.
- Keep in mind that words of appreciation are always valued.
- Follow this guide for talking points:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gNOu-WAUNzFgdIBZLBkrAurah-JwBPVZjIFcO_0ay-vSE/edit?userstoinvite=Ilana.Solomon@sierraclub.org&ts=58890ad7

ADDRESSING THE ENVELOPE

In order to find your member's address, you should first go to <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find> and put in your zip code. This website will bring up your member's web page, and there you can find all of their addresses.

Members of the U. S. House of Representatives:

*The Honorable (full name)
United States House of Representatives
(Address) House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515*

Members of the U. S. Senate:

The Honorable (full name)

United States Senate

(Address) Senate Office Building

Washington, D. C. 20510

To find the contact information of your legislators or to write your legislator via email, please visit

<http://www.house.gov/representatives/find> and

<http://www.senate.gov/senators/contact>.

4. Set up a meeting with your Member of Congress:

A really powerful way to have your voice heard on what should be included in a renegotiation of NAFTA is to set up a meeting with your Member of Congress. All representatives have offices in Washington, D.C. as well as in their home districts so it's simple to set up an in-person meeting to talk through your issue. Below you will find some tips for setting up a meeting with your Member of Congress.

While communicating with legislators and their staff might sound intimidating at first, organizing a Congressional visit is easy once you know what to expect and how to plan it. Plus, remember that it is the job of Members of Congress to represent their constituents — they want to know what is important to you.

Below are four steps to organizing a successful meeting:

SCHEDULE YOUR VISIT

The first step to setting up a meeting with the staff of your Members of Congress is to know who your Members are. You can find names and contact information of your two Senators at this webpage (<http://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/>) and your Representatives at this webpage (<http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>).

On the webpages of your Senators and Representatives, you can find information on where he or she stand on issues related to trade and the environment, contact information (in Washington, D.C. and in his/her home district), and more.

To schedule your meeting in his/her home district, find the number to the district office on your Mem-

ber of Congress' webpage and ask to speak with the scheduler. It can sometimes take multiple tries to get through to a scheduler, so be persistent. Once you reach the scheduler, ask to set up a meeting with the staff member who works on trade issues.

Call again the day before your scheduled visit to confirm your meeting.

PLAN AND PRACTICE

A successful Congressional visit starts with good preparation. Read about your legislator's background and find out where he/she stands on issues relating to the NAFTA, trade, and the environment.

It's equally important that you have a clear idea of what you are going to say and how you are going to say it. Remember that you are trying to convey your support about the progressive vision and persuade your Representative or Senator to commit to a progressive standard for NAFTA replacement, so building a strong argument is critical your success.

You may want to start by creating a meeting agenda that outlines your key points. You should also think about articles, fact sheets, or reports that can strengthen the persuasiveness of your argument. You can print out these materials and bring them to your meeting to leave with the staff member you meet with.

If possible, incorporate short personal stories that explain or bolster your position into your meeting, such as how past free trade agreements, like NAFTA, may have affected your community or state. Speaking about your experiences or the experiences of your community members is a powerful way to advocate for change and ensure that your meeting will not be forgotten by the legislator.

If you are visiting as a part of a group, decide who will cover what points prior to the visit. Select a lead for the meeting — someone who will keep the group on task, keep an eye on the clock, and ensure that all points on the agenda are discussed. Also, make sure you or someone in your group takes notes and documents any commitments your Member of Congress may have made during the conversation.

Finally, since a clear, concise, and well-organized presentation and a clear ask of your Member of Congress will yields the best results, make sure that your group practices at least once together.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MEETING

Show up 10 to 15 minutes early to your meeting. Start the visit on a positive note by thanking the legislator and his/her staff for taking the time to meet with you. Some small talk at the beginning of the meeting can allow you to find common ground and build a connection with your legislator and their staff.

Once the meeting begins in earnest, state the reason why you are there in a clear and concise manner. Summarize your concerns regarding the renegotiation of NAFTA and be clear from the beginning that you are here to ask your Member of Congress to publicly support at least these three points, plus any others that you feel are particularly important.

- A transparent negotiation process, with public texts, that invites the U.S. public and Congress to help formulate U.S. positions and to comment on negotiated texts after each negotiation round.
- Removing broad investor rights, including ISDS.
- Including strong and binding labor and environmental provisions, including a requirement to adopt policies to fulfill the Paris Climate Agreement, subject to an independent dispute settlement process.

Since your time is limited, try to present your argument and demands in five minutes or less. During the meeting, you will want to balance how much time you and the Congressional staff speak. Listen carefully, take notes, and ask questions. In responding to the questions or statements of the legislator or legislator's staff, be mindful of the fact that you are here to build bridges. Even if you deeply disagree with the Congressperson's position, remain respectful.

At the end of the meeting, outline what the next steps are for follow-up. Go over what you and/or your group will do next and what legislator and/or Congressional staff will do next. Review any commitments that your elected official might have made during the course of the meeting. Thank the staff again for their time. Finally, leave with the staff a folder that contains related information and your



requests. Also, remember to ask for a business card from the Congressional staff so that you can easily follow-up.

FOLLOW UP

Within one to two days of the visit, send a thank you letter or email to your legislator and his/her staff that outlines the different points covered during the meeting. Also, forward any additional information you promised to supply. Try to keep in regular contact with your legislator by sharing trade-related news, events, and stories.



IV. ENGAGE THE MEDIA

Engaging the media around a progressive vision for trade is a great way to put the spotlight on climate-friendly approach and influence the NAFTA renegotiation and will help build public and political support. Below you can find a key ways to engage the media that can be used to correct and clarify facts in a news story, editorial, or opinion piece, oppose or support actions of an official agency, direct attention to a problem, spur news editors to cover an issue that is being overlooked, and urge readers to support your cause.

GIVE AN INTERVIEW OR STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

Being a voice for your community can be a powerful way to mobilize support and attention to our trade priorities, including NAFTA renegotiation. This message box will help focus your message when speaking to media or the public: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1lvxYy4LI07X3N5CRuE5C5fOrFp-tlL7XyUAB5H1eSRTQ/edit?ts=58812dd2#slide=id.gb4c3b97a_30

WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Increasing coverage of the often under-reported environmental and climate impacts of trade in the media is a great way to educate members of the public and influence policy makers. By writing a letter to the editor, you can engage your local media and raise awareness about the impacts of trade on the environment.

Because many people read letters to the editor (LTEs), they are a quick, effective, and continuing

means of communicating your campaign message to a wide audience. Here are some tips as to how to write an effective letter to the editor.

- **Pick a Timely Topic** — Newspapers rarely publish letters about topics that are not being covered in the news. Referring to a previously published article or column will increase your letter's chances of being published.
- **Research the Guidelines** — Most papers' length limit on LTEs is around 250 words. Stick to this so that an editor does not cut out the important points of your letter. Some papers require a typed letter. Others may want it sent via e-mail. Often newspapers want your address and phone number so they can verify that you wrote the letter. You can usually find a paper's guidelines on the letters page. If not, call the paper directly or visit its website.
- **Assume Nothing** — Do not assume that your readers are informed on your topic. Give a concise but informative background before plunging into the main issue. Refer to any newspaper article or editorial by date and title. Also include any relevant credentials that prove you are informed about your topic
- **Be Brief** — State your position as succinctly as possible without eliminating necessary detail. Keep your paragraphs short. Long, rambling sentences and digressions will cause people to lose interest quickly. Stick to one subject.
- **Maintain Composure** — It is okay to express outrage, but it should be kept under control. Avoid personal attacks and focus instead on criticizing specific policies or ideas.
- **Find a Local Angle** — Readers are more interested in an issue when they see how it affects their lives and communities. Find a way to show how budget cuts or environmental policies will affect this particular readership.
- **Involve Your Volunteers** — You can generate a lot of letters by distributing outlines of sample letters to your campaign volunteers. Stagger mailings a few days apart for a current topic or weeks apart to spur general interest. Be sure letter writers have their facts straight. Letters by Sierra Club members that argue for competing interests or include inconsistent facts do not reflect well on the organization.
- **Avoid Form Letters** — Do not send the same letter to two competing papers in the same circulation area. A form letter sent to papers in different markets should look like an original, and all letters should be signed individually.
- **LTE Template** — Here's a template you can use to model your own LTE on the climate-friendly approach with a focus on the upcoming battle over NAFTA renegotiation: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Nnos2CDBcYWWaX8am4Qc0nr-WU834BPYTein6EyUGfQU/edit>

V. CONCLUSION

Thank you for your engagement in this work, as it comes at such a pivotal moment in the fight to transform trade. We hope that you found the information in our activist toolkit helpful. Again, if you have any questions or need any help with our toolkit, please reach out to our Responsible Trade Campaign Representative Anthony Torres at anthony.torres@sierraclub.org. Good luck!

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