

Community Comment
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Sam Pennisi

Global Trade and local education

I have a couple of things on my mind. One is global in nature and will affect us all at some point in our lives and for years to come. The other is local and community based and will affect those who choose to participate; but all will be lifted by those who ~~participate~~. do. sp

sp First the global issue. President Obama has been negotiating with our fellow nations that make up the Pacific Rim. ~~The PTP, or the Pacific Trade Partnership has been in the process for some time.~~ As with any negotiation involving multiple countries, this is a very tedious and complicated process. Imagine the difficulties. We have different cultures and histories. We have different standards of living. We have different levels of opportunities. We have different levels of what makes an hourly wage seem reasonable and acceptable. We have different expectations for the future; individually and as nations. So, to try and come to a fair and acceptable deal on trade seems daunting at best; nearly impossible at worst.

The Administration has been working on this for years and this month asked Congress to allow the first phase of the deal to be approved. This was not unreasonable. ~~There is much at stake in reaching a deal.~~ sp A deal will affect imports and exports of goods and services. Jobs will be created and lost. Nations will be more influential than others. All these things will have an effect on global politics, economic dominance, job growth, and long term stability of the region and the various countries involved. In other words, this is important stuff.

And Congress voted no. Even members of the President's own party helped defeat the deal as it is to this point. And I think they did the right thing.

I am not against a trade deal with our Pacific Partners. But a few crucial things seemed out of whack to me. If Congress had voted yes, our representatives could not have made changes to make the deal better down the line. As much as I often disagree with this congress, I want our representatives to have input in the deal. It appears that private companies have the power of nations and can sue to force countries to change their laws to satisfy international agreements. This is way too much power for corporate interests. And, most importantly, most of this deal is secret. We don't know what is in this that will affect jobs, wages and average workers in our own country. We not only can do better than this, we must do better than this. I feel that each country should be as self-sufficient as they can be with the natural resources available to them. International corporations should not control our laws. Transparency will be the President's best option for continuing this process.

HSU's

At the local level, I want to remind us that ~~the~~ Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, or OLLI, continues to thrive and grow. An amazing array of classes are offered each semester for those of us over fifty. It is lifelong learning at reasonable prices by well qualified teachers. I urge you to check out the classes offered. Something will be just right for you. ~~We are never too old to learn.~~

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.