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The image shows the top portion of a website. At the top left, there is a dark banner with the text "AFPBusiness.com Marketing Solutions Ahead." and "Website Design | Marketing/PR | Video/Audio | Classes". To the right of this banner is a "AFP Quick Links" dropdown menu and a row of social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, RSS, Google+, Tumblr, Email, LinkedIn, and Pinterest. Below the banner is a blue navigation bar with the "AUGUSTA FREE PRESS" logo on the left. The navigation menu includes "Home", "News", "Politics", "Sports", "Calendar", "Web Design, Marketing, More", and "Chris Graham". Below the navigation bar, there is a large graphic featuring a lightbulb with a landscape scene inside it, and a "CLICK HERE" button. The text "marketing & PR" is written in a large, stylized font, and "BY AUGUSTA FREE PRESS LLC" is written below it. On the far left edge, there is a vertical text strip that reads "VER UR", "ETING", "SSES", and "AFP".

# David Levine: Trading up for a better trade deal

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As the dust settles on the fight in Congress over Fast Track for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal, we have an opportunity to think anew about what good trade policy could be. If get past the rhetoric, we can expand the public and political dialogue about trade and truly understand the impact it can have all our businesses.

Representing hundreds of thousands of businesses from diverse sectors and different regions nationwide, we have come to understand first-hand that trade is an important element of a robust economy. As a business organization, we opposed Fast Track and the TPP not because we are against trade, but because we need a better trade deal than what the TPP is offering.

In evaluating the TPP we identified key principles that can and should be considered when negotiating a strong and fair trade bill.

One is transparency, a fundamental goal for developing and implementing any trade agreement. Legislators and the public must have access to the trade agreement in formation. From our businesses' perspective, it is not acceptable that a small number of larger corporations get to set the agenda while small and medium-sized enterprises don't even get a seat at the table. Any trade deals should go through an open dialogue that includes a diverse group of stakeholders

We also need more transparency in the business practices advanced by a trade deal, so that we know where our products are coming from and what is in them. Country of Origin rules and disclosure of chemical ingredients are two examples.

There should also be a system for fair adjudication. Corporations should not have a greater power than sovereign governments. Deliberations for disputes should be handled with the most democratic processes possible, while ensuring that state sovereignty remains respected.

Another fundamental principle is that trade deals should boost worker and environmental standards, not lower them. We should preserve the right and ability of our federal, state and local governments to set standards and guidelines. We should seek the highest common ground, not the lowest.

We no longer need to choose between advancing our businesses and promoting sustainability in the workplace and in the environment. We can do all three. In fact, many businesses have been quietly doing this for decades.

By protecting the environment and public health, and instituting better working conditions for employees, we will ensure our economy is stronger for the long-term. When businesses pay workers better, there is more money to be spent in our economy. Businesses that eliminate toxic chemicals from their products, experience the financial benefits of the increased consumer demand for safer products. Businesses that keep jobs in the US, make our economy and country that much stronger.

The best trade deal will ensure that countries build their standards even further, speeding us to a global economy built on high-road and sustainability standards.

A good trade bill will also help grow local economies and products made in the United States. This has historically proven to create more and better jobs for our country. Past trade agreements have pushed too many businesses and jobs overseas, benefiting the largest multi-national corporations at the expense of everyone else.

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Small and medium enterprises play such an important role in our economy. We know that money spent with local business stays in those communities longer, creating more economic benefits for local markets. We need to ensure that those local businesses have a level playing field. That is not true under the TPP.

Overall, what we need is a trade deal that recognizes there's more to economic growth than just GDP. There are many costs such as poor health, pollution, and underemployment that GDP doesn't account for. Such costs are too often transferred to the public meaning an increased financial burden for society, when they should be borne by producers instead.

The TPP, for all its flaws, has given us an opportunity to reach a smarter position on trade that works for everyone. It would be a grave mistake for us to ignore that opportunity.

*David Levine is president and CEO of the American Sustainable Business Council, based in Washington, DC, which has member organizations that span more than 200,000 businesses.*



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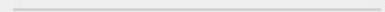
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