

# Sherrod Brown pushes Biden administration to drop trade from international pact

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WASHINGTON, D. C. - U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, a Cleveland Democrat, on Wednesday said the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) that's being negotiated between 14 countries lacks adequate labor standards and enforcement provisions, so he's pushed President Joe Biden's administration to drop trade from the agreement.

"It's been negotiated behind closed doors without input from workers or Congress," Brown [said of the IPEF's trade provisions](#). The pending agreement also aims to set supply chain, clean economy and fair economy standards for the involved countries: Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Fiji; India; Indonesia; Japan; the Republic of Korea; Malaysia; New Zealand; Philippines; Singapore; Thailand; Vietnam and the United States.

Brown told reporters the United States needs stronger safeguards to keep China from routing its products through other countries, like Vietnam, to get around U.S. laws.

Brown said the Biden administration should proceed with agreements on the other three sections of the deal, but hold off on trade until it can "bring labor to the table." He said that was done successfully when the [United States, Mexico, and Canada \(USMCA\)](#) Agreement updated the [North American Free Trade Agreement \(NAFTA\)](#) in 2020.

Brown, whose 2024 reelection is key to Democrats' hopes of retaining Senate control, noted he "fought against bad deal after bad deal negotiated by presidents of both parties," including NAFTA, the [Central American Free Trade Agreement](#), normalizing trade relations with China and the [Trans-Pacific Partnership](#). He also wrote a book called [Myths of Free Trade: Why American Trade Policy Has Failed](#).

James Proctor, a senior vice president at McWane, Inc., an ironworks manufacturer with a plant in Coshocton, said his company "can compete with anyone on a level

playing field,” but too often has to compete against illegally dumped Chinese products that are routed through other Southeast Asian countries.,

“We all recognize it’s important to build trade relationships that will counter China, but China uses many of the same countries that are involved in these IPEF discussions to fraudulently trans ship their products and circumvent U.S. duties and laws, which put U.S. industries and jobs at risk in the process,” said Proctor. “This has been a real problem in our industry. It’s undermined our American operations and the investments that we make them. And it puts an unfair thumb on the scale against American companies and our team members.”

Brown said that until he spoke out, the Biden administration was moving forward with rolling out the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework – which included a “trade pillar” with no enforceable labor standards – this week at the Asia Pacific Economic Forum in San Francisco. After Brown raised concerns, the Biden administration **announced** that it would not move forward with the trade pillar while Biden is in San Francisco this week to discuss the deal.

Jason Clark, who serves as political representative of the Indiana/Kentucky/Ohio Regional Council of Carpenters union, which represents 18,000 workers in Ohio said decades of bad trade agreements have led to factory closures in Ohio, which devastate workers, their families and entire communities.

“People are sick of watching their life work disappear because of trade deals written behind closed doors, without the input of those of us whose jobs and livelihoods are on the line,” said Clark.