

CTA Name: Urge Biden to Temporarily Waive Intellectual Property Rights around COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics and treatments

Date Created: 5/3/21

Description of the Issue:

In October 2020, India and South Africa proposed that the World Trade Organization (WTO) temporarily waive some Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) rules during the COVID-19 emergency.

Despite widespread support for its adoption, the Trump Administration led opposition to the waiver, and with a handful of other WTO signatories, blocked its adoption.

On April 15, 2021, Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and other progressive Senators sent a letter to President Biden urging him to support the adoption of this temporary waiver” noting that “doing so will help to ensure the most effective and efficient response to this once-in-a-lifetime global pandemic.”

They explained that lifting intellectual property barriers and allowing countries to manufacture locally will expedite access to vaccines and treatment, prevent unnecessary deaths, expedite global vaccination efforts, and facilitate a stronger, faster economic recovery: “our globalized economy cannot recover if only parts of the world are vaccinated” and “without large increases in production, many countries may not have widespread COVID-19 vaccination until as late as 2024.

They also noted that lifting barriers to production is a matter of equity--ensuring that all global economies can recover from the pandemic and thrive. “We must make vaccines, testing and treatments accessible everywhere if we are going to crush the virus anywhere.” They went on to note that initiatives to expand access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatments such as the COVAX initiative have proven woefully inadequate and that nationalistic vaccine policies where every country fights for access

to limited supplies make it nearly impossible for developing nations to afford the vaccine: “as countries worldwide compete for limited supplies, developing nations will have to pay pharmaceutical corporations monopoly prices for access. This harsh reality is already unfolding before our eyes with reports of South Africa paying more than double the price paid by the European Union for the AstraZeneca vaccine.”

According to a report on DemocracyNow from May 3, 2021, over 100 pharma lobbyists recently descended on Washington to urge Biden to oppose waiver of the TRIPS rules.

Who to call/contact:

- 1. Email Biden:** www.whitehouse.gov/contact/

Sample Script:

I am writing to ask you to support the World Trade Organization (“WTO”) in adopting temporary waivers of the TRIPS rules to allow developing countries to locally manufacture COVID-19 diagnostics, treatments and vaccines.

A temporary and targeted waiver of intellectual property rights to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 technology is not only the right thing to do from a moral standpoint, it is the best way to combat the global pandemic and ensure the health of our global economy.

Current efforts to encourage the equitable production and distribution of vaccines such as the COVAX initiative are failing miserably. At present only 1 in 100 vaccine doses are going to developing countries. At the same time, the number of people falling sick and dying is rising exponentially, making the need for swift vaccine production that much more urgent. This is especially true for developing countries like India that lack sufficient medical and technological infrastructure to handle the recent rise in cases. **[feel free to add a personal note here if you have seen news reports around deaths in India or other countries or have a personal connection to the issue]**. We must do something NOW as a nation to help stem the tide of human loss around the globe.

I urge you to support the WTO's adoption of temporary waivers of TRIPS rules to allow countries to locally manufacture COVID-19 diagnostics, treatments and vaccines.

2. Email or Call Senators Klobuchar and Smith and/or your Representative.

Email Amy: <https://www.klobuchar.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/email-amy>

Call Amy: *phone:* 202-224-3244

Email Tina: <https://www.smith.senate.gov/share-your-opinion>

Call Tina: 202-224-5641

Email Betty McCollum: <https://mccollum.house.gov/contact>

Call Betty: 202-225-6631

Sample Script:

Dear Representative McCollum

I am a member of Indivisible St. Paul and am a constituent. I live at **(insert address)**. I am **(writing/calling)** today to urge you to encourage the Biden administration to support the World Trade Organization ("WTO") in adopting temporary waivers of the TRIPS rules to allow developing countries to locally manufacture COVID-19 diagnostics, treatments and vaccines.

A temporary and targeted waiver of intellectual property rights to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 technology is not only the right thing to do from a moral standpoint, it is the best way to combat the global pandemic and ensure the health of our global economy.

Current efforts to encourage the equitable production and distribution of vaccines such as the COVAX initiative are failing miserably. At present only 1 in 100 vaccine doses are going to developing countries. At the same time, the number of people falling sick and dying is rising exponentially, making the need

for swift vaccine production that much more urgent. This is especially true for developing countries like India that lack sufficient medical and technological infrastructure to handle the recent rise in cases. **[feel free to add a personal note here if you have seen news reports around deaths in India or other countries or have a personal connection to the issue]**. We must do something NOW as a nation to help stem the tide of human loss around the globe.

I urge you to do everything you can to persuade the Biden administration to support the WTO's adoption of temporary waivers of TRIPS rules to allow countries to locally manufacture COVID-19 diagnostics, treatments and vaccines. Thank you.