



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

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Baucus Introduces Bill To Assist Displaced Workers *New Legislation Streamlines TAA Benefit Process*

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) U.S. Senator Max Baucus introduced *the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for Industries Act* giving workers displaced by trade easier access to TAA benefits. Senator Coleman (R-MN) co-sponsored the legislation.

Today's legislation would make the process of applying for benefits more efficient by allowing a single eligibility determination to cover workers in a particular industry on a nationwide basis. Under current law, TAA petitions have to be filed and reviewed on a plant-by-plant basis, which is inefficient and often leads to inconsistent results. That is why today some workers who lose their jobs in industries such as textiles, small electronics, and lumber get the TAA benefits they deserve, while others just down the street may not.

"Maintaining a well-trained workforce is key to our nation's long-term competitiveness and economic health," Baucus said. "TAA is a safety net catching those few who lose out from our trade policy choices. This legislation will cut through the red tape so deserving workers face less uncertainty and can be enrolled and retrained sooner."

For more than 40 years, TAA has been providing retraining, income support, and other benefits to workers who lose their jobs due to trade. In the Trade Act of 2002, Baucus spearheaded the most comprehensive expansion and overhaul of the TAA program since 1974.

"The TAA program is a lifeline," Baucus said. "Participating workers in my home state of Montana tell me that TAA has made it possible for them to make a new start. Unfortunately, some in Montana and across the nation lose out because of the inconsistent, case-by-case way benefit decisions are made today. That is just not right."

The bill makes industry-wide TAA certification automatic in cases where the President, the International Trade Commission, or another qualified federal agency has already determined that imports are having an injurious effect.

For example, if a group of workers loses their jobs in an industry covered by a trade safeguard or an antidumping or countervailing duty order, within a set period of time, they do not need to file a petition for TAA. Instead, they can proceed directly to the second step of demonstrating their individual eligibility and enrolling through the one-stop center in their state.

Even where there is no trade remedy, the bill streamlines the process by permitting the Secretary of Labor to make her eligibility determination on an industry-wide basis in cases where she determines that a plant-by-plant approach is not appropriate.

This includes cases where the Secretary has received three or more TAA petitions from workers at different plants in the same industry within a 6 month period. It would also include cases where the Senate Finance Committee or the House Ways and Means Committee passes a resolution requesting an industry-wide investigation. In these cases, the Secretary may certify workers in an entire industry if she determines that workers across the nation are losing their jobs because of international trade.

“We owe our trade-affected workers a fair chance to train for the jobs of the future and get back into the workforce,” Baucus said. “We should be doing everything we can to ensure that TAA benefits reach every qualified worker who needs them. This legislation will benefit workers in Montana’s hard-hit lumber industry and other workers nationwide. I plan to press hard to get these TAA improvements enacted into law.”

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