

Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

“A Hearing on Recent U.S. Trade Agreements”

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Monticello, Iowa

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I haven't been able to find work as a machinist since Square D shipped its production to Mexico. Before that, I worked at Goss Graphics for 12 years, but they downsized until there was no one left to downsize, closed shop and shipped everything overseas.

There's only so much work for a machinist to find when all of the plants in the area close. I know I'm not alone—our local union lost 1,000 members—all of these people are in the same boat that I am. And that's one scary boat.

After getting laid off at Goss and Square D, I went to school for computers for a year. But all of the jobs I applied for in this field wanted people with at least five years experience. I've pretty much given up on computers as an option. It's not just the manufacturing jobs that are getting sent overseas—the computer jobs are as well.

For a while, I was stocking shelves at the local grocery store at night. But I just signed up for unemployment insurance again, because after I took a leave from my job to do political work during the Iowa caucuses, I haven't been given any hours back.

I'm luckier than most because at least my wife is working, and I'm able to maintain my health insurance through her, particularly because I had a quadruple bypass right before I was laid off from Goss.

But I'm worried about the future of my children. I know they feel sorry for me because I haven't been able to find work, but my real concern is them. My biggest concern is that they're going to be stuck in low-income jobs all of their lives. I have an 18-year-old son who I'm hoping will get to go to college. My daughter is in nursing school, and I pray that she finds a job when she graduates. And my other son just returned from the National Guard, and I'm trying to help him find a job. It's not easy for any of us.

Frankly, that's my concern for this entire country. Jobs that created the middle class are disappearing. Bush hasn't done a darn thing to stop jobs from going to other countries. I feel like we're in a race to the bottom. I think the best thing for the economy would be for Bush to stay on his ranch in Texas permanently.