



For Immediate Release
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**BAUCUS SECURES DEPT. OF LABOR PROMISE
TO CONTINUE TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE
AS WRANGLING OVER UNRELATED PROVISIONS
BLOCKS EXTENSION OF PROGRAM FOR AMERICAN
WORKERS**

*Finance Chairman blasts move to deny workers training, money
in last-minute scheme to extend other programs*

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) tonight blasted maneuvers that blocked a planned three-month extension of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program, which supports workers, firms, and farmers if they are affected negatively by global expansion of the American economy. An objection was lodged against the TAA extension in an effort to add unrelated extensions related to Federal Aviation Administration policy. Baucus moved quickly this evening to secure a promise from the U.S. Department of Labor to continue the TAA program through 2008 with funds provided in the omnibus appropriations bill passed last night, despite the expected December 31 expiration of TAA’s authorization due to the last-minute hold.

“Holding American workers hostage to leverage unrelated priorities is bad enough at any time of year, but it’s hard to believe that in the week before Christmas, a political move will stop training, money, and other assistance for hard-working folks in need,” said Baucus. **“I applaud the Department of Labor for answering the call to help workers despite this hitch in the Senate, and I will work for a full and robust TAA reauthorization – including coverage for service workers, more flexibility with training and money, and expanded opportunities for businesses seeking to avoid layoffs altogether – in early 2008.”**

A copy of the Labor Department’s letter to Baucus and Finance Ranking Member Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) is attached at the bottom of this release.

Baucus introduced comprehensive Trade Adjustment Assistance legislation in July of this year. For more information on the Trade and Globalization Adjustment Assistance Act of 2007, please visit this URL:

<http://finance.senate.gov/press/Bpress/2007press/prb072307.pdf>.

Baucus also entered a statement into the Congressional Record this evening, urging his colleagues to move forward with a three-month extension of TAA. The text follows here:

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE
FLOOR STATEMENT OF SENATOR MAX BAUCUS
DECEMBER 19, 2007

Mr. BAUCUS: Mr. President, today, we face a major setback to the effort to advance American exports and freer international trade. Some on the other side of the aisle are threatening to kill Trade Adjustment Assistance, or TAA.

Trade Adjustment Assistance provides training, health, and income benefits to trade-displaced workers. It has been integral to America's trade policy since 1962. That's when President Kennedy first created the program.

TAA has helped America's workers to improve their competitiveness. It has helped workers to retrain and retool. And it has provided Americans the security of knowing that the government will help them if trade causes a displacement.

Trade Adjustment Assistance has been vital to my home state of Montana. Since the last TAA reauthorization in 2002, more than 1,500 Montanans have participated in the TAA program. It has helped workers — especially in the lumber industry — to retrain and re-enter the workforce.

In May, one particular Montanan, Jerry Ann Ross of Eureka, testified about Trade Adjustment Assistance before the Senate Finance Committee. Jerry's story is like that of many Montanans who have been laid off from American lumber mills.

Jerry worked at a lumber mill for 13 years. But then in 2005, she lost her job. That's when she became eligible for Trade Adjustment Assistance. With TAA's help, Jerry entered a training program at Flathead Valley Community College. She expects to graduate this month.

With TAA's help, Jerry has updated her skills. She has made herself more competitive in the workforce as a construction superintendent and an accountant. Jerry's is one of many TAA success stories around the country.

At the Finance Committee hearing, we also learned that the current Trade Adjustment Assistance is not perfect. It needs to be updated. We need to improve it to reflect today's globalized economy.

That is why in July, along with Senator Olympia Snowe, I introduced the Trade and Globalization Adjustment Assistance Act. Our bill would correct the flaws of today's program.

Our bill would extend TAA benefits to service workers. Service workers account for 4 out of 5 jobs in our economy.

Our bill would extend TAA benefits to workers whose companies outsource to China, India, and other countries with which America does not have a free trade agreement.

Our bill would increase training funds for states. It would make sure that states have enough money to retrain workers.

And our bill would increase the portion of the health care tax credit that the Government provides to ensure that trade-displaced workers have access to health care coverage while they are retraining.

The House passed similar legislation in November. But the Senate has not yet completed the job.

That is why a 3-month extension of Trade Adjustment Assistance is critical. It would keep the current program going. It would provide time for Congress to complete its work on reauthorizing the program.

Last week, the House passed a 3-month extension of the TAA program. The House bill is fully offset. It is non-controversial. That bill should have passed easily in the Senate.

But instead, some on the other side of the aisle have chosen to hold it up. Their dispute is over an unrelated issue. As a consequence, some on the other side of the aisle are close to allowing Trade Adjustment Assistance to expire.

TAA expiration would send a horrible message to America's workers, especially those who depend on Trade Adjustment Assistance.

TAA expiration would also send a terrible message about the 2008 trade agenda. If the Senate cannot pass a 3-month extension of Trade Adjustment Assistance, I am not sure what the Congress can do on trade next year.

Reauthorization and modernization of Trade Adjustment Assistance is my number one trade priority for 2008. It is the right thing to do. American workers deserve no less.

Unless Congress passes a robust TAA bill next year, I don't see how we can move pending trade agreements. Trade Adjustment Assistance has to come first.

And so, Mr. President, I call on my Colleagues on the other side of the aisle who are holding up this modest extension of Trade Adjustment to think again. I call on them to allow this useful program to continue. And I call on them to step back from what could be a major setback to American exports and freer international trade.

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