



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release
Monday, May 3, 2004

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(WASHINGTON, D.C.) U.S. Senator Max Baucus made the following statement on the Senate floor late this afternoon as an amendment to provide Trade Adjustment Assistance for service workers was offered to the "Jumpstart Our Business Strength" (JOBS) bill, which is being debated in the full Senate:

TAA Amendment to the JOBS Bill
Senate Floor Statement of Senator Max Baucus
May 3, 2004

"I am pleased to join Senators Wyden, Coleman, and Rockefeller in offering this amendment to extend and improve Trade Adjustment Assistance.

We live in uncertain economic times. American workers are justifiably uneasy. Business leaders are, as well. People need jobs — good jobs that can support their families. And those jobs are hard to find.

Every day we hear about jobs moving overseas. Since the summer of 2000, more than three million American manufacturing jobs have disappeared.

But service jobs are also disappearing. In the past few years, between a quarter and a half million service jobs moved offshore to other — mostly low-wage — countries. Economists expect more to follow.

Whole sectors of our economy once immune from international competition now find themselves in the thick of it.

Now, being part of the global economy is not a bad thing. On the whole, it benefits the American economy enormously.

But that does not mean that we should ignore the difficult adjustments forced on more and more workers by the movement of jobs offshore. We must do all that we can to create and keep jobs, and to prepare our workforce to do those jobs well.

There is no silver bullet. There is no one thing to assure a challenging and well-compensated job to every American. But that does not mean that we should stand idly by.

This JOBS bill is part of the solution — a very important part. But even as we work to pass this bill, we must continue to look for more ideas.

We should seek solutions with broad support from both sides of the aisle. We should seek solutions that make sense to workers, and to the business community, as well.

One of those solutions is Trade Adjustment Assistance, or “TAA.” In the Trade Act of 2002, the Senate overwhelmingly supported TAA. And we made some very important improvements to the program.

The central purpose of TAA is retraining — helping displaced workers to get new skills and make a new start. Workers whose jobs have moved offshore often need new skills. TAA can help them get the skills they need to compete in today's job market.

But when we improved TAA in 2002, we did not extend its benefits to service workers. The time has now come to do so. With growing public concern over the movement of jobs offshore, the goal of extending TAA to service workers is enjoying broadening support.

For example, when America's Trade Representative, Ambassador Zoellick, testified before the Finance Committee in March, he told us that extending TAA to service workers is "something that we should examine very closely. If you are going to require change," he said, "you have got to help people adjust."

Both the Business Round Table and the Information Technology Industry Council have also expressed support for the idea of extending the TAA program to service workers.

That is a large part of what this amendment does. It ensures that service workers who lose their jobs because of trade have the same access to retraining opportunities and other TAA benefits as manufacturing workers. That's sensible. And it's fair. And it's an important piece of any broad strategy to address the movement of jobs offshore.

I want to commend my Colleagues, Senators Wyden, Coleman, Rockefeller, and Bingaman for working together on this important amendment.

Senators Wyden and Coleman have been real leaders on TAA. Senator Rockefeller worked hard to make sure that the TAA health care tax credit is affordable and really works. And Senator Bingaman contributed some important ideas on improving the operation of the TAA program – particularly on the issue of TAA for Communities.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Coalition. This recently-formed non-profit has taken on the important mission of keeping us all

up to date about how the TAA program is operating — and how it could do better. Their work has provided important background to this amendment.

I urge my Colleagues to support the amendment."

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