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We Can't Afford to Give Up on American Workers

When Congress rushes through foreign trade agreements, proponents assure us that we'll take care of the workers affected by unfair foreign trade.

Last week, the Senate had the chance to match its words with actions by passing an extension of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program (TAA) and the improved Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC).

Both programs expired on February 12. Legislation to extend them passed the House last year with strong bipartisan support.

This legislation would have continued the Trade Adjustment Assistance program – which helps dislocated workers who lost their jobs due to unfair foreign trade – retrain for new jobs. It would have also extended the improved Health Coverage Tax Credit, a lifeline that allows retirees whose pensions have been jeopardized by plant closures – including 5,000 Delphi retirees in Ohio – afford health coverage.

Yet Conservative Washington Republicans blocked an extension of these critical programs on Thursday evening. These politicians don't think twice about voting for a trade bill, but they dismiss American workers and retirees fighting to pay the bills.



[Click here to view Sen. Brown's speech on a TAA extension](#)

Our actions bring consequences, and so does our inaction. TAA and the improved HCTC are expiring at the expense of Americans who worked hard and played by the rules, yet lost their jobs, their pensions, their health care – or all three. These programs help tens of thousands of Americans either get back to work or regain some measure of the financial security that has been stripped from them due to unfair foreign trade.

effects of trade and globalization.

But the difficult reality faced by too many workers reliant on TAA and the HCTC reminds us of the

Just last month I visited the Mahoning Valley One Stop to listen to workers who are using TAA to develop new skills in order to find new and secure jobs. I was there with a simple message. We can't pass trade agreements that undermine Ohio workers and then turn our backs on those workers when their jobs are moved overseas.



The TAA and HCTC enhancements aren't expensive or complicated. In just the last two years, more than 155,000 additional trade-affected workers across the country who might not have been certified under the former TAA program became eligible for TAA assistance.

That's because under this program, unlike the old program, workers whose jobs are shipped to India or China – or other countries with which we do not have a trade agreement – are now eligible.

These Americans are rubber workers from Johnson Rubber Company in Wood County. They are furniture manufacturers from Masco in Jackson County, or aluminum castings manufacturers from Mansfield Brass and Aluminum in Richland County.



In addition, workers in the service industry are eligible for TAA.

These workers include engineers at Belcan Engineering in Cincinnati and computer programmers at Electronic Data Systems in Fairborn. It includes researchers at the Transportation Research Center in Moraine.

In total, more than 367,000 workers nationwide have been certified eligible for TAA since 2009. These workers use TAA to acquire new skills to return to work as quickly as possible.

Middle class families, American manufacturers and farmers, and community leaders across the country all know that TAA is a critical part of our nation's economic strategy. It helps the private sector hire workers with the right skills, and it helps workers transition into these jobs.

In addition, the HCTC program also helps these trade-affected workers and retirees who lose their benefits when their employer goes bankrupt. HCTC allows the workers and retirees to purchase private health coverage to replace the employer-sponsored coverage they lost.

It is in no one's best interest for Americans to lose their private health insurance. The HCTC prevents tens of thousands of Americans from falling into the ranks of the uninsured, which can lead to increased need for Medicaid.

These are Americans who worked hard, were loyal to their companies, and earned their pensions and employer-sponsored health coverage day after day after day. That's until the day they watched it all evaporate.

The combination of TAA and HCTC is a winner for business, for workers, and for our economy. It will boost the economy. And it is too important for the country.

Our fight to extend these critical lifelines is far from over.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sherrod Brown".

Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator



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