

May 2, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Mr. President and Congressional Leadership:

We are writing to urge you to support Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA).

The Trade and American Competitiveness Coalition brings together U.S. business and agriculture enterprises who support domestic and international policies that will enhance U.S. competitiveness to promote economic growth and new jobs and prosperity for America's workers, farmers, consumers, communities and businesses. The Coalition reaffirms American business' long standing support for TAA as a central part of America's overall trade agenda.

TAA is as vitally important today as it has been over the years. It helps American businesses get into exporting and is designed to give displaced workers the new skills and resources they need to re-enter the 21st century job market. Accordingly, in addition to moving on the pending trade agreements and trade preferences, we urge Congress and the Administration to find a way forward to ensure that the United States has in place an effective TAA program to support U.S. global economic engagement.

For almost fifty years, TAA has enjoyed bipartisan support as an essential part of American trade policy. In 1962, President Kennedy recognized the link between increased trade and economic growth: "Increased economic activity resulting from increased trade...can bring a dynamic new era of growth." He also recognized that a national policy to increase trade has costs as well as benefits, and that the country as a whole has a responsibility to share those costs:

"[American] workers who suffer damage from increased foreign import competition [should] be assisted in their efforts to adjust to that competition. When consideration of national policy makes it desirable to avoid higher tariffs, those injured by that competition should not be required to bear the full brunt of the impact. Rather, the burden of economic adjustment should be borne in part by the Federal Government."

President Bush echoed this same position almost fifty years later when, in his last State of the Union Address in January 2008, he said:

"Trade brings better jobs and better choices and better prices. Yet for some Americans, trade can mean losing a job, and the federal government has a responsibility to help. I ask Congress to reauthorize and reform trade adjustment assistance, so we can help these displaced workers learn new skills and find new jobs."

The Trade and American Competitiveness Coalition supports the work of the Administration and Congress to re-energize America's trade policy. In that effort, we urge the Administration and Congress to find a way forward to ensure that the United States has in place an effective TAA program, as part of America's overall trade agenda, which should also include passage of the three pending trade agreements and renewal of the key trade preference programs for eligible countries.

Signed and supported by:

American Farm Bureau Federation ®
American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA)
Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM)
Business Roundtable (BRT)
Coalition of Service Industries (CSI)
Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S.
Emergency Committee for American Trade (ECAT)
Fashion Accessories Shippers Association (FASA)
Information Technology Industry Council (ITI)
National Association of Manufacturers (NAM)
National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC)
National Retail Federation
Tech America
TechNet
Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA)
Travel Goods Association (TGA)
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
U.S. Council for International Business