



June 11, 2015

The Honorable John A. Boehner
U.S. House of Representatives
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3508

Dear Congressman Boehner:

On behalf of the National Foreign Trade Council, I want to urge you to vote in support of both the Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) portions of H.R. 1314 when they are considered on the House floor. You have already received numerous calls and letters from the business community regarding the importance of passing TPA, and I will not repeat those arguments. I would, however, like to explain how important TAA is.

Trade adjustment assistance began in the Kennedy Administration as part of an implicit bargain with organized labor—they would acquiesce in what was at the time modest trade liberalization, and workers who were adversely affected would receive assistance in retraining and finding new work. The program has not always been as comprehensive or as successful as some would like, but its underlying principle remains intact and valid: if workers lose their jobs because of trade, the government has some responsibility to help them transition to new careers.

As our economy has evolved, TAA has also become an instrument of sound economic and social policy. The jobs being lost, particularly in the manufacturing sector, tend to be lower-skilled. The workers who hold those jobs are not agile. They do not have the education or skills to transition easily to other employment, and they often live in communities where other job opportunities are scarce. The threat of long term unemployment that they face is enormously disruptive to them, their families, and to the communities where they live, which see tax revenues that support schools and other services decline along with employment.

TAA is designed to address those problems by giving unemployed workers the opportunity to acquire new skills and identify new job opportunities, and then help with relocation if necessary. In the process, it provides hope for workers who want to rejoin the workforce but are not adequately prepared to do so, and it repairs the holes in our social fabric that are caused by rapid economic change. Its program for small businesses does the same for companies that find themselves unable to cope with the changes they are experiencing, and by doing so, saves thousands of jobs that would otherwise have been lost.

TAA is one of the few programs we have that is intended to help our population cope with our transition to a world of globally integrated supply chains. Some TPA opponents would prefer that transition not occur, but that is impossible in today's world. The wiser course is to make sure that we are well-prepared to compete in this more challenging environment. That means trade agreements that promote market access for our farmers, manufacturers, and service providers and create rules that provide for a level playing field, but it also means taking steps at home to make sure our work force is prepared for the agility a more competitive environment requires.

Trade Adjustment Assistance is the best thing we have to do that, and if it is allowed to expire, we not only step away from the bargain we struck more than fifty years ago, we abandon the best resource we have – our workers. I hope you will not let them down and will support both the TPA and TAA portions of the H.R. 1314.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. A. Reinsch", written over a white background.

William A. Reinsch
President

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