

June 9, 2015

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our more than 11 million members, we write to express our opposition to the bill to renew Trade Adjustment Assistance which will be considered when the House debates Trade Promotion Authority. While we strongly support renewal of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), the bill to be considered by the House falls short in a number of critical areas.

This TAA bill fails to provide the annual funding needed to provide training, income and other support for workers. Because of the size and breadth of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, these agreements will cause significant job dislocation. It is critical that Congress provide sufficient funding to support workers who have lost their jobs in the wake of trade agreements, and this bill fails to meet the anticipated need.

Importantly, this version of TAA does not cover public sector workers, who had been included in the renewal of TAA in 2009. According to a 2007 report by the Congressional Research Service, more than 12% of government jobs are offshorable or highly offshorable. Eligibility for TAA benefits must address the realities of trade and the broad range of workers at risk of job loss, including public sector workers. This bill also fails to raise the Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC) from a maximum of 72.5% to 80%. Because not all workers are eligible for coverage under the Affordable Care Act, the HCTC must be set at 80% in order to assist jobless workers who face the challenge of affording health coverage for their families.

In addition, we oppose this bill because it cuts the Medicare program. Specifically, it increases Medicare sequester cuts by \$700 million in order to help fund TAA.

We are alarmed that the Medicare program would be raided to pay for completely unrelated legislation. Maintaining the financial integrity of Medicare is necessary to ensure that it is able to provide the services that seniors count on to keep them healthy and to safeguard their financial security in their twilight years. We object to the lose-lose choice presented in this bill, that pits working families against seniors. There are other ways to fund TAA that will protect workers without undermining Medicare.

Moreover, we oppose any sleight-of-hand that promises to fix the Medicare cut in a different bill. We know from past experience that these types of maneuvers often prove illusory. The issue of the TAA pay-for must be resolved within the TAA bill in order to ensure that the Medicare cut does not stand.

It is imperative that a comprehensive and appropriately funded TAA program be authorized by the Congress as part of any major trade package. Unfortunately, this TAA bill fails both tests and should be rejected.

Sincerely,

Amalgamated Transit Union
American Federation of Government Employees
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers
Communications Workers of America
National Association of Letter Carriers
National Education Association
Service Employees International Union
International Brotherhood of Teamsters