

(Washington, DC) - U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-4) voted in support of legislation that would make critical improvements to the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program and benefit thousands of workers in western Pennsylvania who have been displaced by foreign competition. Today's Trade and Globalization Assistance Act, H.R. 3920, makes critical improvements to the TAA program by making training, health care, and wage benefits more accessible; creating a new TAA program that addresses the needs of communities; and reauthorizing TAA programs for an additional five years. For the first time, the measure would extend the TAA program to service industry workers, whose jobs are also increasingly moving overseas. The TAA program was created in 1962 to assist workers dislocated due to government policies that eliminated tariffs and other barriers to trade. It provides workers with career counseling, job training, and income support.

The Trade and Globalization Assistance Act, which passed today by a vote of 264 to 157, also includes a provision which would provide for automatic group certification for workers who win dumping and countervailing duties claims before the International Trade Commission (ITC). Displaced workers from firms like Wheatland Tube Co. in Wheatland, Pa., would gain quicker access to TAA programs if they win their cases. On June 7, Wheatland Tube joined the United Steel Workers and other U.S. pipe and tube producers in filing a claim with the ITC alleging that imports of circular welded pipe from China have adversely affected the domestic industry and its workers.

"A healthy steel industry is vital to western Pennsylvania's families and, while it has shown some signs of strength in recent years, it continues to face serious challenges and vulnerabilities in the future, particularly from heavily subsidized foreign competitors like China," said Congressman Altmire, who sent U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez an October 25 letter in support of Wheatland Tube's case before the ITC.

"While something must be done to restore a semblance of fairness and equity for our domestic steel producers and other U.S. industries adversely affected by unfair foreign competition, today's legislation will provide displaced workers improved access to the essential retraining programs and income support they need to transition into new jobs and take advantage of increasing globalization."

Earlier this month, Congressman Altmire joined Congressman Adam Smith (D-WA) in introducing the Trade Adjustment Assistance Improvement Act, of which major provisions were incorporated into today's Trade and Globalization Assistance Act. Congressman Altmire is also at the forefront of pushing for a tough China trade bill, which would aggressively address China's continued disregard for U.S. trade law and protect U.S. workers and manufacturers

from unfair competition. In August, he led an effort among freshmen Democrats in urging House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles Rangel (D-NY) and Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee Chairman Sander Levin (D-MI) to bring to the House floor legislation that will assertively challenge the unfair trade policies of China and other countries not observing the rules of fair trade.