

(Washington, DC) - Today, Rep. Jason Altmire (PA-4), a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, reaffirmed his ongoing commitment to protect Pennsylvania's working families at a hearing this afternoon about the Buy America Act. The hearing addressed the Federal Highway Administration's circumvention of clear Congressional intent in regard to the Buy America Act, which weakens the domestic steel industry and reduces its ability to compete globally.

"A healthy domestic steel industry is vital to Pennsylvania's working families and, while the industry has shown some signs of strength in recent years, it faces serious challenges and vulnerabilities in the future, particularly from heavily subsidized foreign competitors like China," said Rep. Altmire. **"The Buy America Act is simple. It establishes a requirement for federal agencies to purchase products, parts, and services from individuals and companies from the United States, keeping taxpayers' money and American jobs here at home."**

The Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 included the first Buy America requirements for federally-assisted highway projects to ensure the purchase and use of American-produced steel, iron and manufactured products.

Three limited waiver exceptions are permitted, including for instances when using such domestic materials would increase the cost of the project by more than 25 percent. In its application of the 25 percent test, the Federal Highway Administration has divided bridge projects into smaller components and tested each one individually, rather than testing the entire project as a whole. By dividing the projects in this manner, the 25 percent threshold is often exceeded for the smaller components when it would not have been exceeded if the project was tested in its entirety. When projects exceed the 25 percent threshold, the Buy America requirements can be waived by the Secretary, which provides an advantage to foreign steel companies who are able to sell steel at a much cheaper rate.

To strengthen the enforcement of the Buy America Act, Rep. Altmire joined with Rep. Brian Baird (WA-3) and Chairman Peter DeFazio (OR-4) in introducing H.R. 1984. The legislation will close two major loopholes by clarifying that the law applies to any project that receives federal funding and that it applies to an entire bridge project, not just component parts of the project.

"Strengthening the Buy America Act will keep future federal investment in the U.S., rather than see it used to develop the steel industry in other countries," said Rep. Altmire. "By not addressing the situation, the domestic steel industry will continue to lose high-paying jobs and manufacturing and engineering talent, and be at a disadvantage when competing for projects in the future."