

# News from Congressman Adam Smith

*Representing Washington's Ninth District*

*Member: Armed Services Committee, International Relations Committee, co-chair of the New Democrat Coalition*

For Immediate Release

October 27, 2005

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## **SMITH LEADS HOUSE EFFORT TO HELP WORKERS COMPETE IN GLOBAL ECONOMY**

Washington, D.C. – Today, U.S. Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA) introduced the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Improvement Act with 75 original co-sponsors, including U.S. Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY), the Ranking Member on the House Ways and Means Committee, which has oversight of American trade policy and U.S. Rep. Benjamin Cardin, Ranking Member on the Trade Subcommittee. The U.S. manufacturing sector has been hit hard with unemployment, and in recent years the service sector has experienced similar declines in employment as a result of the increasingly global and competitive marketplace.

Currently, TAA provides income support, job training, job searching, relocation assistance and health care tax credits to workers who have lost their jobs due to trade. However, TAA is only available to workers in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors. The new legislation would extend trade TAA benefits to displaced service workers, such as software programmers, hi-tech workers as well as to entire industries if those industries are subject to a trade remedy under US laws that protect domestic industries. The legislation also amends eligibility requirements for TAA to cover those who lose jobs due to overseas production to any country, not just those countries with whom the U.S. has trade agreements. The bill simplifies the application process for wage insurance. In addition, the legislation strengthens the data collection and reporting requirements by making it mandatory for the Department of Labor to track and make public data on both service sector and manufacturing job trends and TAA usage. Finally, it dramatically increases the funding cap for job training programs and enhances health care subsidies for displaced workers.

“Our nation’s prosperity and economic growth is dependant on our workers’ ability to continually upgrade their skills,” said Smith. “In the face of ever greater global competition, we

need to ensure that American workers remain the best and most highly skilled workforce in the world. The TAA program is an important component of our commitment to workers. This bill recognizes the reality of our changing economy and provides critically important wage and health insurance to those seeking to regain employment.”

Bill Center, the President of the Washington Council on International Trade said, “Worker dislocation is one of the major challenges facing the U.S. economy. Even though trade is but one small component of that problem, anything we can do to better facilitate the ability of our workforce to more smoothly and easily transition between jobs and careers should be applauded. We appreciate Representative Smith’s consistent strong leadership on this issue and look forward to the day these benefits will be available to all displaced workers.”

Smith’s legislation has also received support from members of the labor community.

Kristin Farr, Legislative Director for Society of Professional Engineer Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) and also legislative director for International Federation of Professional Technical Engineers (IFPTE) 2001, said that, “while displaced manufacturing and agricultural workers have benefited from TAA for many years, America's growing population of service sector workers have been left out. Representative Smith's legislation is critical to promoting the competitiveness of our hard-working American workforce because it provides the necessary funding for retraining that displaced workers need. Current TAA legislation only applies to SPEEA members who worked in Boeing's Commercial Airplane division. Representative Smith’s legislation could extend TAA benefits to those laid off SPEEA members who worked on a Boeing defense program or an IT job within Boeing's Shared Services Group (SSG).”

Marcus Courtney, President of the Washington Alliance of Technology Workers (WASHTECH), noted that, “like the manufacturing sector, those in the service sector are increasingly being affected due to job loss from world trade. This legislation will allow those affected greater access to health care, retraining and unemployment insurance benefits as they make the transition.”

Smith will continue to work with his colleagues in a bipartisan fashion to ensure that American workers have access to the retraining and health care benefits they need. The changes included in this bill will help workers maintain comprehensive, affordable benefits for themselves and their families.

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