

**Prepared comments for
Trade Adjustment Assistance Coalition event
Senator Norm Coleman**

February 15, 2006

Thank you for the chance to come by and say a few words. I always enjoy hearing my colleague Max Baucus. He is as thoughtful as they come, and in these unfortunate days of hyper-partisanship, in his committee work and on the floor, he is a valuable voice for compromise and getting things done.

Along with our friends from North Dakota, our states also carry the burden of protecting the heartland from Canadian invasion. It's a tough job but somebody has to do it.

We're here to talk about a critical issue to every single state in the union: Trade Adjustment Assistance. Washington is a city of 1,000 issues and just a handful of priorities. We need to move TAA up in the order of priorities for this country and we appreciate you all being part of the coalition to try to do that.

There is no question that globalization is not only here to stay, but is an economic reality whose impact is gathering momentum. We have a suburban community South West of Minneapolis named "Eden Prairie." We're modest in Minnesota, except when it comes to naming some of our cities. I grew up not far from a place in New York called "Flushing Meadow," and we used to say the "meadow" part was misleading.

Anyway, I am told that if you go to the Burger King on Flying Cloud Drive in Eden Prairie, the voice you hear in the drive through saying "You want fries with that?" is not a Minnesota teenager, but a person thousands of miles away in a telemarketing center in India. As Minnesota author Tom Friedman has told us all, the world is very flat and getting flatter all the time.

But just because globalization has certain advantages to a State like Minnesota, where we sell billions of farm products and medical devices overseas, doesn't mean we ignore globalization's negative effects.

The point of entering into globalization is not to be a passive participant, but to win the global competition.

That means America needs to toughen up when it comes to education, training and retraining of our workers.

Our value proposition in the global marketplace is quality. And that means we need to make the most of every student and every worker.

We don't do Trade Adjustment Assistance because we feel sorry for displaced workers: we do it because we need to get them back in the game at a higher skill level.

That's why I have stood shoulder to shoulder with Senator Baucus on three pieces of legislation I'll just touch on:

The Trade Adjustment Assistance Equity for Service Workers Act (S. 1392), the Trade Adjustment Assistance for Industries Act (S. 1444), and the Trade Adjustment Assistance Improvement Act (S. 1963).

The Trade Adjustment Assistance for Industries Act:

- Streamlines the process for certification of TAA claims on an industry- or occupation-wide basis, rather than on a plant-by-plant basis.

The Trade Adjustment Assistance for Service Workers Act:

- Provides service sector workers certain benefits, including training, income support, health insurance, and tax credits if they are injured by trade, as well as help to small and medium sized U.S. businesses to become more competitive in order to retain and expand employment.

Trade Adjustment Assistance Improvement Act:

- Makes comprehensive improvements to the program including re-thinking the funding formula, eliminating restrictive age requirements, extending application and processing timelines, and expanding coverage to those who lose their job to countries with whom we have no trade agreement.

The foundation of our society is a dynamic economy that creates good jobs. Trade Adjustment Assistance is as important as tax cuts, highway bills and cutting regulation. The reason is that it is specifically targeted at the places where job creation needs help.

Our issue is too important to get lost in the shuffle. I hope you will continue to do the leg work of communicating the importance of Trade Adjustment Assistance early and often.

You will be doing an important thing to help America win the global competition for jobs and help America be its best in the new century.