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RAHALL, DELEGATION SPONSOR TRADE ADJUSTMENT FUNDING BILL

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) along with his colleagues in the West Virginia delegation have introduced legislation to keep Trade Adjustment Assistance funds available to eligible West Virginians. This program provides benefits for persons who have lost their jobs as a result of foreign competition.

West Virginia will run out of funds unless emergency supplemental funds are provided by Congress. The legislation, introduced by Rep. Alan Mollohan on behalf of the entire West Virginia delegation, will allow the transfer of almost \$50 million from an underutilized unemployment compensation administrative fund to the TAA account within the Department of Labor for funding to states involved in the TAA program.

"It is important to note that this will not increase the federal budget deficit in any way," Rahall said. "It is merely a transfer of funds and involves no new funding."

Rahall commended Rep. Mollohan for his action on this program. "TAA is very worthwhile, very vital program for those West Virginians who have lost their jobs to unfair foreign competition," Rahall observed. "Rep. Mollohan deserves a great deal of credit for drafting this important legislation."

West Virginia needs about \$1.2 million in order to keep up payments to approximately 1,200 workers through the end of the fiscal year. These men and women have been victims of the huge trade deficit rung up in recent years.

"It is also important to note that this bill will allow the Department of Labor to resume lump sum payments under the Black Lung program which had been suspended because of depleted funds," Rahall said. "For far too long, the victims of Black Lung have been prime targets for the budget knife. It is the intent of this bill to stand behind those who have built our great state -- our coal miners."

The delegation is hopeful of swift Congressional action.

FROM CONGRESSMAN ALAN MOLLOHAN

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WASHINGTON - Congressman Alan Mollohan has introduced important legislation, cosponsored by the entire West Virginia House Delegation, that would provide funding to keep Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) benefits available for affected West Virginians.

Mollohan explained that TAA provides benefits for persons who lost their jobs as a result of foreign competition. The benefits include job retraining and payments to affected workers so that they can recover from job losses resulting from plant closings.

"For example, the former employees of Anchor Hocking in Harrison County are recipients of TAA because their plant closed as a result of foreign competition," Mollohan said. "It is important to affected West Virginians and to the state that TAA be continued."

West Virginia will run out of funds to continue providing TAA without emergency supplemental funds. The Mollohan legislation will not increase the Federal budget. The bill will allow the transfer of approximately \$50 million from an underutilized unemployment compensation administrative revolving fund to the TAA account within the Department of Labor which would pass that funding on to States participating in the TAA program.

The bill was cosponsored by Congressmen Harley Staggers, Jr., Nick Joe Rahall, and Robert Wise. The bill may be considered by the House of Representatives soon.

Mollohan said West Virginia needs about \$1.2 million in order to maintain benefits for approximately 1,200 workers who have lost their jobs through the end of the fiscal year.

The measure will also allow the Department of Labor to resume lump sum payments under the Black Lung program which had been suspended because of dwindling accounts. Mollohan said lump sum Black Lung payments are payments made to Black Lung claimants to cover the time between when their disease was first diagnosed and the time when their claims were actually approved by the Department of Labor. He said that time period may sometimes cover years.