



**For immediate release
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Hispanic Leaders Urge Senate to Pass Trade Adjustment Assistance

Washington, DC – The Board of Directors of The Latino Coalition (TLC) today urged the U.S. Senate to pass legislation to re-authorize and expand the Trade Adjustment Assistance program (S. 1209). “We must pass Trade Adjustment Assistance in order to provide a safety net for American workers displaced by the expansion of trade,” said TLC President Robert G. Deposada.

Congress established Trade Adjustment Assistance in 1962 to assist workers whose job loss is associated with an increase in imports. Workers are eligible for up to 52 weeks of income support, provided they are enrolled in re-training. The program also provides job search and relocation assistance. Despite low unemployment through the second half of the 1990s, the number of workers eligible for TAA has increased. In 2000, approximately 35,000 workers received TAA benefits.

This legislation would expand eligibility and improve the existing program. The existing TAA eligibility requirements have not kept up with the changing times. TAA covers too few workers – and fails to address major problems that workers and communities face.

TAA would provide benefits to secondary workers, including suppliers and downstream producers. For example, iron ore workers who faced layoffs because of increased steel imports would be covered. TAA eligibility would also be expanded to include workers affected by shifts in production (in addition to those affected by increased imports).

“The legislation would increase from 52 to 78 weeks the income maintenance, substantially increase funds available for training, and increase assistance for job relocation,” said HBR President Mario Rodriguez. “S.1209 would also link TAA recipients to health care benefits under existing programs, and help recipients in making COBRA payments.”

As a part of TAA reform, this legislation would establish an inter-agency group to coordinate Federal assistance to workers and trade-impacted communities, help communities develop strategic plans following job losses, and provide technical assistance, loans, and grants.

“We strongly believe that the expansion of free trade will be a significant boost to our economy and will not be a burden in our workforce,” Deposada added. “However, this legislation will help provide the peace of mind and the necessary support for anyone affected, as we create more and better opportunities to our businesses and its workers.”

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