

June 9, 2015

Dear Representative:

We are writing to urge you to oppose the current version of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), which is expected to come up during the Trade Promotion Authority debate. As drafted, TAA would be paid for by extending the Medicare sequester until the end of 2024.

As you may know, TAA provides job training, economic assistance and help with health benefits for workers who have been displaced due to trade agreements. TAA has been an integral component of any trade deals since 1962. While we support providing assistance to displaced workers, we oppose using Medicare to pay for it.

Cutting \$700 million from Medicare to pay for something completely unrelated compromises the integrity of the program. Furthermore, as the Academy of Family Physicians points out, taking money out of Medicare for TAA would be “damaging to the delivery of health care.” (<http://ow.ly/O2uqN>) Large corporations, which benefit the most from trade deals, should be asked to step up to the plate and fund TAA, not the more than 53 million seniors or disabled Medicare beneficiaries.

Congress has previously used the Medicare sequester to fund other non-Medicare related items. This precedent should be avoided in the future, not continued through TAA. Medicare should not be used as a slush fund every time Congress is looking for a pay for.

Further, we also oppose any type of legislative sleight-of-hand that promises to fix the pay for at a later date in a different bill. We know from past experience that these types of maneuvers quite often prove illusory. The TAA pay for must be resolved at the front end and Members of Congress should not rely on promised fixes in the future.

Unless Congress comes up with a responsible alternative to fund TAA, one that does not raid Medicare, we urge you to vote against TAA. Seniors groups will be watching to ensure that you vote to protect the integrity of the Medicare trust fund.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Retired Americans
Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.
Medicare Rights Center
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
Social Security Works
Strengthen Social Security Coalition
Wider Opportunities for Women