



International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers

CONGRESS MUST PRIORITIZE U.S. WORKERS IN TRADE POLICIES

The IAM is urging Congress to be engaged in the shaping of trade policy that benefits American workers first. Trade should be equal and fair, offering the American workforce the chance for job growth and strengthening. Congress should also ensure there are safety nets like Trade Adjustment Assistance for workers when trade deals negatively impact them. We have witnessed bad trade deals like NAFTA and CAFTA, which resulted in the net loss of U.S. jobs. Such unfair policies should not be repeated going forward, and it's Congress' duty to ensure protections are in place.

All trade deals should include binding and enforceable labor and environmental standards, even matching current U.S. laws. Labor standards, for example, must be about actual and well-defined rights, including collective bargaining.

The U.S. constitution gives Congress the power over trade activity with foreign countries.

What is IAM requesting?

- **FUND** the U.S. Labor Department's Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program and allow it to start receiving applications.
 - o The IAM has been continually advocating for the reauthorization of the TAA program since it entered phaseout termination in 2022.
 - o The federal program was meant to help workers impacted by bad trade policies, providing resources like training and employment services. These are thousands of workers each year who are left unemployed due to no fault of their own.
 - o Data shows there are more than 102,000 workers waiting for Congress to renew TAA. These submitted worker petitions for assistance cannot be processed by the DOL until reauthorization.
- **ENSURE** a fully staffed Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), which is our nation's principal trade advisor, negotiator, and spokesperson on trade issues.
 - o USTR Ambassador Katherine Tai has led the department with some key vacancies like the deputy USTR for the Western Hemisphere, Europe, the Middle East, labor and environment.
 - o The IAM believes key USTR positions like those overseeing labor matters should be filled, ensuring U.S. workers have a voice with regards to issues impacting them.
- **SUPPORT** measures to address unfair trade actions by nations such as China.
 - o Support the USTR's Section 301 investigation into China's exploitative efforts to control the maritime, logistics, and shipbuilding sectors. This crucial investigation should aim to quantify the extensive and ongoing efforts by the Chinese Communist Party to undermine U.S. commerce, and then

IAM RAIL DIVISION



PRIORITIZE RAIL WORKERS IN FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS AND POLICIES

SUPPORT the Railroad Employee Equity and Fairness (REEF) Act (H.R. 2785/S. 1274)

Ask: *Cosponsor the REEF Act and support its passage in the House and Senate.*

- The REEF Act is a common-sense, bipartisan bill that would eliminate sequester cuts to railroad unemployment and sickness benefits that have affected railroad workers and their families for more than a decade. Nearly 200,000 active railroad workers are eligible for unemployment and sickness benefits from the Railroad Retirement Board's (RRB) Unemployment Insurance Account. But likely because of an omission Congress made almost 40 years ago, the RRB is subject to sequestration. Beginning on May 10, 2023, sequestration reduced railroad unemployment and sickness insurance benefits by 5.7 percent – reviving benefit cuts that had been paused during the pandemic.
- These types of cuts do not affect any other type of unemployment benefit or specific industry. More troubling is that the cuts do not actually affect federal spending, as Railroad Retirement benefits are paid for solely by railroaders and their employees and do not cost the taxpayers a dime besides administrative funding needed for the RRB.

This bill is supported by all of rail labor, the Association of American Railroads, the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and Amtrak.

PASS Railroad Retirement Board Fiscal Year 2025 Appropriations:

Ask: *IAM Rail Division supports the RRB's FY25 requested funding of **\$172.3M**. Please work with appropriators throughout markups to ensure funding reaches that number.*

- The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) administers benefits under the Railroad Retirement Act (RRA) and the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA). Under these laws, the RRB provides a wide range of benefits including retirement, survivor, disability, unemployment, sickness and vested dual benefits, to rail workers and their families. The RRB's funding structure is unique in that railroad employer and employee contributions are held in trust funds to pay railroad benefits and support RRB operations. Enacted appropriations language authorizes the RRB's administrative budget to be appropriated from the railroad retirement trust fund system to finance operations, rather than the federal general revenue fund.
- The RRB faces two major challenges: (1) a severe staffing deficit, and (2) the need to persevere with ongoing Information Technology (IT) Modernization efforts. The federal COLA along with non-personnel operating costs result in the RRB lacking sufficient funds to increase staffing levels. Additionally, while \$173M was requested in FY24, the agency's budget was cut by \$2M and only provided with \$126M, nearly \$50M short. Fully funding the RRB allows the RRB to hire enough