

# **GOP Colombia demands prompt delay for Baucus bill**

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The chairman of the Senate Finance Committee announced Thursday that GOP demands for action on the Colombia Free Trade Agreement had forced him to delay work on legislation aimed at helping workers who lose their jobs from trade.

Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) hoped to mark up legislation renewing and expanding the trade adjustment assistance (TAA) program on Wednesday. But Friday, he said that work would not take place until after the August recess because some senators would not agree to do TAA absent a guarantee of action on the Colombia trade deal.

Earlier in the day, several business sources said some Republican senators were linking action on Colombia to the TAA legislation, and that this could prevent the markup. The Trade and American Competitiveness Coalition, which includes Citi, Boeing, IBM and General Motors, has called for Congress to approve legislation modernizing TAA.

“I have said all year that trade adjustment assistance (TAA) is my number-one trade priority, and that TAA must be renewed and expanded for the sake of America’s workers before congress acts on further free trade pacts,” Baucus said in a statement.

“I believe that the Colombia FTA should be considered, and should pass, but on its own merits and in its own time. I do not believe that the Colombia FTA can pass Congress unless our duty on TAA is done.”

The expansion of TAA would set up programs offering training and unemployment payments to workers who have been outsourced by international trade agreements.

The Colombia deal has been blocked in the House by Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and other Democrats, who have voiced concerns about violence in Colombia against labor organizers.