

OPENING STATEMENT

HON. BART GORDON (D-TN) Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Science

Mark-Up: H.Res. 717, *Directing the Secretary of Commerce to transmit to the House of Representatives a copy of a workforce globalization final draft report produced by the Technology Administration.*

March 29, 2006

We all care about American jobs. Since the beginning of 2001, this country has lost almost 3 million manufacturing jobs. When a manufacturing plant is closed or downsized, scientists and engineers lose their job, too. Over 50% of the engineers employed in America work in manufacturing facilities.

So as this Committee prepares to move legislation addressing what we should do about American competitiveness and how do we attract young people to engineering and science, it seems absolutely essential that we have all the information at our disposal to guide our work.

I suppose some might say that they are not worried about jobs moving overseas. But I know that for communities in Michigan and New York and Texas, where half a million manufacturing jobs have been lost, or in my home state of Tennessee, which has seen 62,000 jobs blow away, it is a very real problem.

If you are not worried, I think you should be. Up to now, we have all thought about offshoring being largely confined to manufacturing. But Alan Blinder, the former Vice Chairman of the Federal Reserve, has estimated that between 28 and 42 million American jobs in the service sector may be offshored in the next few years.

In 2004, the Commerce Department's Technology Administration (TA) produced a report on what is happening to the workforce as a result of changes in information technology and services, pharmaceuticals and semiconductors. They also produced an analysis of the education and training programs in other countries for "knowledge" workers. That report, as produced by the TA analysts, was approximately 200 pages in length. Fifteen months after it was due, the Department finally released a twelve-page report summary.

My staff has interviewed the staff of TA who worked on the original report. Some of the analysts feel that the report does not accurately reflect their case study findings. None of the analysts even know where the five page introduction came from.

The analysts have never been able to show their original chapters to anyone outside the department - not even the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA), which is supposed to pick up where the TA staff left off. It is hard to see how they could pick up where TA left off when TA wasn't allowed to give them their original research. Further, lest you believe the quiet whispers from some Commerce Department appointees that the report was badly done, Members should know that analysts received a performance bonus after completing it.

I have been trying to get the original draft report for almost a year through every means available to me, but I have not been able to get the Chairman of this Committee or the Subcommittee of jurisdiction to join me. It was with some reluctance that I filed a Resolution of Inquiry about this report to force the Committee to face up to its responsibility to learn as much as we can about what is happening to American jobs.

This Committee has jurisdiction over the Technology Administration. We know they spent \$335,000 producing their report. The American public, and this Committee, deserve to see the full results of their work.

It is hard to see how we can be serious as a Committee about saying we want to address our competitive position if, in the next breath, we say we don't want to see the most sophisticated analysis done by the government about what is happening with American jobs in high-tech fields.

The Chairman has claimed he has determined that this matter is not of high priority for the Committee. I can't speak for others, but for my constituents, jobs is their number one issue. Last week a national poll found that outsourcing of jobs is the number one concern for people around the country, outpolling even the war in Iraq as an issue of concern. All I ask of the Chairman is to sign a letter asking for this report in its fullest draft form. How can the Committee be so busy that signing a letter is too burdensome? Why don't we want to learn everything we can, from any source, about trends that are driving Americans to worry about the future of their employment chances?

The Chairman claims that the NAPA study will answer all our questions so examining the work of Commerce is unnecessary. Well, as I said, NAPA was not privileged to get access to the work of Commerce and so they are unaware of the research findings of TA. Further, NAPA put out their first report in January and concluded they didn't have enough data to say anything conclusive about offshoring and more research is needed.

NAPA has promised at least two more reports, but according to their staff these are likely to focus more on whether the US has a shortage of scientists and engineers and whether H-1B/L-1 scientists and engineers depress wages for American technical workers rather than delve more deeply into offshoring. Finally, even if NAPA were to do this work, why would that be an argument not to see what our own government's analysts, using tax dollars, found when they investigated the issue? I don't know how else to say it, but what NAPA is or isn't doing is a red herring in this argument.

We should get a copy of the full report. This is a necessary step to inform our legislative record and to carry out our oversight responsibility over the Executive branch.

If you care about keeping good, high-paying jobs in the U.S. and believe we need to base policy on as much information as possible, then please join me in supporting this resolution. If you think the loss of jobs is not something to worry about then oppose it.

If you care about protecting the right of Congress to stand up to the Executive and ask for documents and accountability for tax-dollars spent, you should support this resolution. If you just want to trust someone who whispers in our ear that you don't really need to know what government experts have to say - from the same folks who brought you the Dubai ports deal, have refused Republican Senators information related to Hurricane Katrina and have refused to stay at Senate hearings to answer questions - then oppose this resolution.