

# Alexander & Landrieu Push for Fed Help for Bastrop IP Workers

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WASHINGTON, DC (KNOE 8) - Senator Mary Landrieu (D) Representative Rodney Alexander (R) have sent a letter to Department of Labor Secretary Elaine Chao expressing their strong support on behalf of the Louisiana Workforce Commission's request for a National Emergency Grant. The state submitted its application on December 15, 2008 because of the closure of an International Paper Mill in Bastrop, La., which displaced 550 workers at the onset of the holiday season.

"Currently, the local re-

gional planning board lacks sufficient funding to address the mass layoff adequately," the letter states. "The state therefore intends to use the grant to support training, education, housing, and relocation expenses resulting from the layoff. The state has also requested the grant in order to assist the thousands of Louisiana workers who have lost their jobs in the paper manufacturing industry over the last three years.

"The closing of the mill in Bastrop comes at an especially difficult time given the broader downturn in our economy and competition from imports. Given these challenges, it is critical that

the state have the resources to fund re-training and education programs so that these workers have the necessary skills to compete in an already difficult job market. By assisting these workers, we can also ensure that businesses both in Bastrop and the surrounding communities will remain vibrant during this period of uncertainty. This is particularly important given the long term economic challenges that this region has historically faced.

Just last week, Sen. Landrieu wrote another letter to Secretary Chao, requesting that she grant Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) to the workers who have lost their jobs due to the

closure of the mill. Rep. Alexander also wrote a letter to Secretary Chao echoing the need for TAA. Established under the Trade Act of 1974, the TAA Program assists employees who lose their jobs or face a reduction in hours or wages due to increased imports. The state of Louisiana submitted its petition for Trade Adjustment Assistance December 1, 2008.

With the approval of Trade Adjustment assistance, the state will have additional resources to fund job counseling, training and other critical initiatives to help workers get back on their feet.

