



Comments by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) 12/21/2010

(Transcript)

Mr. President⁽¹⁾, I yield to the Senator from Ohio. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciate the generosity of the senior Senator from Massachusetts and especially his leadership on one of the most important debates in the 4 years I have been in the Senate. I thank Senator KERRY for that.

OMNIBUS TRADE ACT/TAA AND HCTC

Mr. President, I hold in my hand 500 pieces of paper, 500 testimonials from retirees who lost their pensions and health care during the GM bankruptcy. These are some of the 50,000 Americans who will be hurt if we do not pass an extension of the Health Coverage Tax Credit this week before the year is out. This stack of paper here does not represent Delta retirees and it does not represent other retirees—thousands of others—who are in the same boat as the Delphi/GM retirees.

Their pensions have been cut. Their employee-sponsored health care has been eliminated. If we do not pass the omnibus trade bill—which includes GSP, trade adjustment, the Andean trade agreement, and the health care tax credit, and some miscellaneous tariffs— if we do not pass this, H.R. 6517, they will take in another economic blow. The blood from this one will be on our hands. We must pass the omnibus trade bill before this Congress ends. I want to share a handful of letters. I know the Senator from Massachusetts yielded for 5 minutes, so I will do this quickly.

"Ms M"⁽²⁾ from Warren, OH, writes that she lost 40 percent of her pension, all her health care, and all her life insurance earned from GM/Delphi. Here is what she said: My husband is self employed and he is on my healthcare. He suffers terribly with chronic pain due to degenerative disc disease. He forces himself to work at least part time but it's a struggle. . . . I have a cerebral condition recently diagnosed. I spent a week in the hospital early this year and am still paying on that too. A 75 percent hike in our healthcare premiums— And that is what will happen if we do not renew this, which will help these 500 and another 50,000— while we try to pay these medical balances on a reduced pension would force us and many others into a downward spiral of existence. Those who we entrust to represent us must realize that our story could be theirs if life situations were different. When do we start treating others how we ourselves want to be treated? Here are others.

"Mr D" from Columbus, IN, writes: Dear Senator Brown—I am a retired Delta Air Line pilot. During my retirement, Delta took my retirement money that I had spent a career of time accumulating and left me out in the cold. The health care tax credit stepped in and helped by giving our family some insurance premium help. Now this is being destroyed too.

"Mr D" from Atlanta, GA: December 21, 2010 CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—SENATE S10915 It is very important that the health care tax credit . . . be continued. After losing the pension income and insurance benefits I was promised when I retired from Delta Airlines, I have made significant adjustments to try to compensate for the losses. Still, after cutting back, the cost of living, skyrocketing insurance premiums, and 2 years of trying to sell my house at a substantial reduction of price while competing with foreclosures, the finances of my friends and me continued to erode.

"Mr G" from Arrowhead, CA: Since Delta Airlines eliminated my pension and health coverage, I looked forward to a Kaiser Permanente HCTC qualified health insurance policy starting January 1. Without this HCTC passage, my premiums will be \$2,600 a month. These go on and on. The omnibus trade bill has received unanimous approval from every Democratic Member of this body. It is supported by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Retail Federation, the AFL–CIO. It is my understanding most Republicans here support it. There are just a few blocking the passage of it.

On Friday, Senator SESSIONS objected to a request Senator CASEY and I made to pass the trade act. I understand his objection. I believe it can be worked through. Senator SESSIONS said he supports the rest of the package. I hope this obstruction doesn't interfere with the need to move on this omnibus trade package. These 500 letters, if each of my colleagues would read two or three of them, I think they would see how important it is we pass the Omnibus Trade Act. It is about the trade adjustment assistance language. It is about 50,000 people who will not be able to afford their health insurance come January 1. Happy New Year to them. It also will help us with Colombia and other countries around the world in our trade policies. This makes so much sense.

Tomorrow, Senator CASEY and I and perhaps some others will ask for a UC⁽³⁾. I hope my colleagues can see fit to move forward on this. It is supported by business groups, by labor groups, by the majority of people in this body. I am hopeful we can bring in the few people who still disagree and make this work for our country. I yield the floor. I thank Senator KERRY for his indulgence.

(1) President of the Senate

(2) Actual names removed for privacy

(3) Unanimous Consent