

Spratt Says Stevens Workers Eligible for Assistance

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC) announced today that the U.S. Department of Labor has certified all employees of West Point Stevens, of Whitmire, as eligible for worker adjustment assistance under the Trade Act of 1974. The determination is the result of a September 2001 petition filed on behalf of the workers at the Whitmire yarn-making plant.

Trade Act benefits are available to those who become unemployed as a result of increased imports.

Upon receiving Stevens' petition for assistance, the Department of Labor investigated the company's major operations. According to the Department, the investigation revealed that "sales, production, and employment at the firm declined." The firm ceased production in May 2001. The investigation also revealed "an increase in company imports of yarn relative to sales."

As a result of the investigation, the Department certified that all West Point Stevens workers who were totally or partially separated from employment after September 14, 2000, are eligible to apply for adjustment assistance under Section 223 of the Trade Act of 1974.

"This certification," said Spratt, "lets workers apply for extended training benefits, job search assistance, and income support payments after unemployment insurance runs out."

To qualify, workers must meet the following six criteria:

1. No suitable employment is available for the worker. Suitable employment is defined as work of equal or higher skill level, paying not less than 80 percent of the worker's average weekly wage, not including self-employment or employment as an independent contractor.
2. The worker would benefit from training that would provide the necessary skills to gain employment and would be within the worker's abilities to complete.
3. Reasonable expectations of employment would follow training.
4. Training is reasonably available from either public or private providers.
5. The worker has the appropriate educational background, work experience and financial resources to complete the training.
6. Training is appropriate for the worker and available at a reasonable cost.

To apply for assistance, workers should go in person to the Newberry
Employment Security Commission, 900 College Street, Newberry, S.C. Phone
276-2110.

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