

Report for Congress

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Steel: Legislative and Oversight Issues

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Summary

The U.S. steel industry has faced increasing difficulties since the late 1990s. More than 30 U.S. steel producers have gone into bankruptcy and many workers have lost their jobs. Many retirees have lost company-funded health care benefits, while their pensions are being taken over by the federally chartered Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. The condition of the industry is discussed in detail in CRS Report RL31748, *The American Steel Industry: A Changing Profile*.

U.S. policymakers responded with a variety of measures. The House of Representatives in 1999 approved a bill that would have required the President to roll back imports. The Clinton Administration reacted with expedited enforcement of U.S. antidumping and countervailing duty (AD/CVD) laws, as well as Section 201 import safeguard measures on wire rod and line pipe products, which expired as of March 1, 2003. The 106th Congress approved and President Clinton signed a law to establish a steel loan guarantee program (P.L. 106-51), and to distribute to petitioners duties collected from AD/CVD cases, (known as the Byrd Amendment to the Agriculture appropriations bill, P.L. 106-387). These measures did not prevent a new downturn in the domestic steel industry. Moreover, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has found that the Byrd Amendment violates its rules. The Bush Administration in its FY2004 budget request proposed elimination of both programs, but both continue to operate. On March 26, 2003, the Emergency Steel Loan Board approved a \$250 million loan guarantee for Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel Corporation.

In the 107th Congress, a broader version of the 1999 import quota bill was reintroduced and gained a majority of the House as co-sponsors. Pressed to act by Members of Congress, steel companies and labor representatives, President Bush in June 2001 requested the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) to undertake a new Section 201 trade investigation on the steel industry and on March 5, 2002, imposed three-year safeguard tariffs with top rates of 30%. Also, a provision in the 2002 Trade Act approved by Congress and the President (P.L. 107-210) assists retirees not eligible for Medicare, who have lost their health care benefits because of corporate bankruptcies.

Some Members of Congress, economists and representatives of steel consuming industries believe that the steel safeguard tariffs are having a negative impact on the competitiveness of a broader range of U.S. businesses. H.Con.Res. 23 and S.Con.Res. 27 call on the ITC to consider the impact of the Section 201 safeguards on steel consuming industries. House Ways and Means Committee Chairman William Thomas on March 18, 2003, requested that the ITC conduct an investigation on the impact of the safeguard measures on consuming industries, under Section 332 of the trade law (19 USC 1332). Meanwhile, U.S. trading partners are challenging the safeguard tariffs and other U.S. steel policy measures under WTO rules (see CRS Report RL31474, *Steel and the WTO*).

This report examines recent legislative measures addressing aspects of problems in the steel industry and issues that may arise in the 108th Congress. The report will be updated as events warrant.

Contents

Congressional Response to Section 201 Steel Safeguard Tariffs	1
Congressional Role in Section 201 Process	1
ITC Reports on Safeguards under Sections 204 and 332	4
Other Legislative Measures Affecting the Steel Industry	8
Antidumping and Countervailing Duties	8
Clinton Administration Section 201 Case on Steel	11
China Safeguards: The Steel Wire Hanger Case	12
The Byrd Amendment (Continued Dumping and Subsidy Offset Act)	13
The Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee Act of 1999	16
Export-Import Bank Loans	18
National Security and Defense Issues	21
Steel Industry Report on National Defense and Economic Security ..	21
The Section 232 Investigation on National Security	21
Steel Issues in Defense Procurement	22
Industry and Legacy Cost Relief Legislation	23
The Steel Revitalization Act	24
The Rockefeller Legacy Cost Bill	25
House Steel Legacy Cost Relief Bills	26
The Outlook for Legislation on Steel	27
For Additional Reading	28

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Congressional Response to Section 201 Steel Safeguard Tariffs

The U.S. steel industry has been in serious difficulties since the late 1990s (the causes and impact of these problems are explored in CRS Report RL31748, *The American Steel Industry: A Changing Profile*). In recent years, Congress has actively considered and acted on measures designed to assist the industry. The industry's economic situation and future, however, remain generally uncertain.

Members of Congress, as well as industry and union representatives, urged President George W. Bush to protect the steel industry with safeguard measures under Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974. The two major types of domestic raw steel producers – “integrated” steel mills, which start by making steel from iron ore, and “minimills,” which generally make a narrower range of products by remelting steel scrap – both broadly supported safeguard actions under Section 201. As detailed in CRS Report RL31748, the integrated mills and the minimills both believe that steel prices have been kept too low and that their ability to invest and modernize has been impaired by a high rate of imports, which has resulted from global overcapacity. But on other issues, particularly with respect to assistance to the industry in paying for pension and health care commitments, the minimills and the integrated mills have quite different perspectives on resolving industry problems.

After the President decided to launch a Section 201 trade case, Congress essentially gave President Bush the lead in addressing steel industry trade issues. President Bush's Section 201 trade action, announced on March 5, 2002, has kept this initiative in his hands. But Congress has remained active in considering additional measures, particularly related to the issue of legacy costs, the pension and health care benefits paid by steel companies.

Congressional Role in Section 201 Process

Sections 201-204 of the Trade Act of 1974, commonly referred to as “Section 201,” permit the President to grant temporary relief, usually “safeguard” tariffs or quotas, to domestic industries that are found to be seriously injured by an increase in imports of articles like or directly competitive with products produced by those industries. Representatives of affected industries may petition the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) for assistance, and the Commission is required to investigate whether the increase in imports is causing or is likely to cause serious injury to the industry involved. Investigations may also be initiated by resolution of the House Ways and Means Committee or the Senate Finance Committee, or may be requested by the President or the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR). After the

investigation, the ITC then determines whether action is warranted and, if so, recommends to the President various forms of import relief.¹

Congress has played an active role before, during and after the Section 201 process by which steel safeguard tariffs were established. On June 5, 2001, responding to many requests from Congress, union representatives and steel companies, President George W. Bush announced that his Administration would call upon the ITC to begin an investigation on steel under Section 201 of U.S. trade law. The President also announced that he would seek multilateral negotiations with U.S. trading partners on fundamental issues of overcapacity and subsidies.²

Senator Jay Rockefeller separately pursued a Senate Finance Committee resolution that would independently call for an ITC investigation, in addition to the presidential action. Sen. Rockefeller had considered including upstream inputs in a different, committee-sponsored request to the ITC, but the final committee resolution endorsed the Administration action and product list, as well as the effort to seek a multilateral agreement. Accordingly, the ITC consolidated the Section 201 case requests from the Administration and Senate Finance.³

The ITC held an extensive series of hearings on the issue of injury to the steel industry from imports, which began on September 17, 2001. The ITC staff had grouped the tariff headings forwarded by the USTR into 33 product categories, under four broad groupings. For each category, the ITC had to determine whether imports for the period 1996-2001 constituted a “substantial cause of injury or threat of injury” to domestic producers (*i.e.*, were “important and not less than any other cause”).⁴

Members of Congress may participate in ITC hearings, and many did so. The first witness at the first hearing, testifying in support of relief, was Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia. He was followed through the course of the hearings by 40 other elected leaders, including members of both parties, both Houses of Congress, and several Governors, who testified in support of relief. In the subsequent ITC hearings on suggested remedies, this perspective was balanced somewhat, as Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska and Representative Jim Kolbe of Arizona provided testimony, not against relief, but to remind the ITC of U.S. interests in maintaining adherence to World Trade Organization (WTO) rules and the interests of U.S. consumers. Similarly, Representatives John Isakson and Nathan Deal of Georgia expressed concern about a constituent, an automotive parts manufacturer, whose business could be adversely affected, they said, by an effective cut-off of steel

¹ For details, see CRS Report RL31396, *Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974: Summary of Provisions and History of Investigations* by George Mangan.

² President George W. Bush. *Statement by the President Regarding a Multilateral Initiative on Steel*. (June 5, 2001), [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/010605-4.html>].

³ *American Metal Market (AMM)*, July 18 and 31, 2001. The Finance Committee resolution was forwarded by letter to the chairman of the ITC on July 26, 2001. USITC. “Revised Announcement on Consolidation of Senate Finance Committee Request with USTR Request of June 22, 2001, for a Section 201 Investigation on Steel,” August 16, 2001.

⁴ Quoted phrases from 19 USC Section 2252 (b)(1)(B).

imports. In view of the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC, many governmental representatives frequently included in their remarks references to the importance of a domestic steel industry to U.S. national security.

The ITC announced on December 7, 2001, its findings that 16 of the 33 product groups under investigation had suffered or were threatened by substantial injury from imports during the period of investigation. Injured domestic producers, the ITC found, included makers of products in all four categories covered by the presidential request: carbon and alloy steel flat, long and tubular products, and stainless steel products. Subsequently, the ITC made a series of recommendations to the President for remedial actions. These recommendations were not unanimous. Two commissioners recommended four-year tariffs as high as 40% for most products (measured by volume of imports), three commissioners recommended tariffs no higher than half that level, and one commissioner generally preferred quotas instead of tariffs.⁵

On March 5, 2002, the White House announced the President's decision on trade remedy measures under the Section 201 process. The President adopted safeguard tariffs of 30% in the first year for high-volume flat and long products, and semi-finished slabs, with a quota for slab imports with no remedy tariffs (a tariff-rate quota). Lower levels of relief were provided for some long products, notably concrete reinforcement bars, and tubular and stainless products. No remedy relief was provided for two product categories included in the ITC injury findings. Relief was for three years, not four, possibly to minimize compensation claims under WTO rules, and, as required by U.S. law, the safeguard tariffs are successively lower in the second and third years.

Canada and Mexico, the North American Free Trade Area partners of the United States, are major steel exporters to the United States, but were exempted from all remedy measures. So were the other U.S. free-trade area partners (namely Israel and Jordan, which are not major producers). Imports from most developing countries were also exempted. The Administration also excluded some steel products from the safeguard tariffs on grounds that they are not available from U.S. producers, and announced that it would undertake a process to review additional possible exclusions. Ultimately, the Administration granted more than 700 requests for exclusion of specific imports from the remedy measures. It may add to the list of exclusions in March in each year after subsequent annual reviews.⁶ The first annual review, completed in March 2003, added 295 specific products to the exclusion list.⁷ Members of Congress have been actively involved in expressing their views to the

⁵ The recommendations of the commissioners are summarized in USITC Publication 3479. *Steel: Investigation No. TA-201-73* (Dec. 2002), Vol. I: *Determinations and Views of the Commissioners*, pp. 2-8.

⁶ President of the United States. *Message to Congress* (House Doc. 107-185), March 6, 2002.

⁷ Dept. of Commerce/Office of the USTR. *Fact Sheet: Exclusion of Products from Safeguard on Steel Products and Automatic Adjustment of the Remedy*, March 21, 2003. A summary descriptive list of exclusions, with quotas, was released with these two documents; the full version is included in 68 *Federal Register* 15494-544 (March 31, 2003).

Commerce Department and to the USTR regarding the exclusion of products from steel safeguard remedies.

The Section 201 statute provides that if the President takes no action or action different from the ITC recommendation, the ITC's recommendations may still go into effect instead of presidential action, if Congress enacts a joint resolution of disapproval of the President's decision within 90 days of notification of that decision.⁸ Representative William Jefferson, emphasizing the potential damage of the steel safeguard tariffs and falling imports to the Port of New Orleans in his district, introduced a resolution under Section 201 to overturn the President's policy. Rep. Jefferson noted that the ITC position, from his point of view, was hardly ideal, since he preferred no remedy tariffs and the ITC tariff levels (as recommended by three members, and therefore the formal position) were as high as 20%. But this was still less than the tariffs imposed by the President.⁹ The resolution was referred to the House Ways and Means Committee, where it was reported unfavorably on April 24, 2002, and tabled on the House floor on May 8, 2002.¹⁰

ITC Reports on Safeguards under Sections 204 and 332

Complaints from U.S. businesses about high steel prices and short supplies began rolling in as the Section 201 tariffs went into effect and steel prices rose in the first half of 2002. Representative Donald Manzullo, Chairman of the Small Business Committee, convened a series of hearings beginning in July 2002, which heard witnesses complain that in the Section 201 tariff decision the steel industry had been favored at the expense of steel users, that steel prices had risen even higher than the nominal tariff increases, and that the supply of steel in sufficient quantity and quality had become unreliable. Many of the companies were manufacturers who supply the Big Three car manufacturers. They stressed that given the present supply-chain cost squeeze, the auto makers could well move more sourcing offshore.¹¹ At a Small Business Committee hearing on September 25, 2002, Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade Grant D. Aldonas refused to consider any early termination of the Section 201 tariffs outside the statutory review process, though he stated that

⁸ CRS Trade Briefing Book, *Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974*, by Jeanne J. Grimmer [http://www.congress.gov/brbk/html/ebtra68.html].

⁹ BNA. *Daily Executive Report (DER)*, "Rep. Jefferson Announces Challenge to Bush Decision to Impose Tariffs on Steel," March 8, 2002.

¹⁰ *DER*, "House Crushes Move to Overturn Controversial Safeguard Steel Tariffs" (May 9, 2002).

¹¹ U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on Small Business. *The Unintended Consequences of Increased Steel Tariffs on American Manufacturers* (Hearing, July 23, 2002) and *Lost Jobs, More Imports; Unintended Consequences of Higher Steel Tariffs (Part II)* (Hearing, Sept. 25, 2002). See also the reports in *AMM*, Jul. 24 and 29, 2002, which particularly note Rep. Manzullo's plan to request that the Attorney General investigate "collusion" in pricing among U.S. steel producers in the wake of recent price increases. The issue of effects of the safeguard tariffs on steel consuming industries is discussed in detail in CRS Report RL31748, pp. 26-31.

the exclusion list could be modified, if steel suppliers were shown to have used false or fraudulent information in successfully objecting to product exclusions.¹²

Reflecting the concerns of steel users, Representative Joe Knollenberg and six co-sponsors introduced a resolution in October 2002 that urged the President to request the ITC to conduct an early review of the safeguard measures and to include consideration of the impact on consuming industries (the ITC is required by law to review the Section 201 tariffs eighteen months after their initiation, in this case by September 2003).¹³ The resolution was referred to the Ways and Means Committee, where no action was taken before the 107th Congress adjourned.

On January 29, 2003, Rep. Knollenberg introduced a different version of this measure as H.Con.Res. 23. The request for an early review of the steel safeguard tariffs by the ITC was dropped, but the measure urges that the President request the ITC, “in addition to monitoring and reporting on the items enumerated in Section 204 of the Trade Act of 1974 ... also to monitor and report on the impact of the temporary safeguards on domestic steel consuming industries.” By April 2003, H.Con.Res. 23 had 73 co-sponsors. In introducing the measure Rep. Knollenberg explained that, “The ITC is required to review the effects of the steel tariffs imposed in March 2002 by September 2003, but is under no obligation to consider the effects of the tariffs on steel consumers ... What good will the tariffs have achieved if there are no customers left to buy steel from U.S. companies?”¹⁴ On March 20, 2003, Senator Christopher Bond introduced a companion measure, S.Con.Res. 27, which has gained seven co-sponsors by the end of the month.

Rep. Knollenberg’s point was based on the fact that the statutory text of the safeguard provisions (in Section 204 of the Trade Act of 1974) make reference only to the effects on the injured domestic industries, with respect to the monitoring and reporting requirements on the ITC. That body is charged with monitoring “developments with respect to the [subject] domestic industry, including the progress and specific efforts made by workers and firms in the domestic industry to make a positive adjustment to import competition.” The ITC must hold a hearing, prepare a mid-point report on the effects of the safeguard measures and, if requested by the President, “advise the President of its judgment as to the probable economic effect *on the industry concerned* of any reduction, modification or termination” of the safeguard action.¹⁵ (Italics added.)

The ITC announced its procedures for the Section 204 investigation on March 10, 2003. It set the following dates for public hearings, as required in the statute:

¹² House Small Business Committee, Part 2 (Sept. 25, 2002), pp. 5-11. *DER*, “Commerce Official Rebuffs Call to End Steel Tariffs; Leverage Cited,” (September 26, 2002).

¹³ *Detroit Free Press*, Oct. 1 and 10, 2002; *AMM*, Oct. 10, 2002. Technically, a “midterm review” is necessary only when remedy measures apply for longer than three years; 19 USC §2254(2). President Bush actually proclaimed the steel safeguard remedy measures for a period of three years and one day.

¹⁴ Rep. Joe Knollenberg. Press release, January 29, 2003.

¹⁵ 19 USC §2254(a).

- July 10, 2003: Stainless steel products;
- July 15, 2003: Carbon and alloy flat products;
- July 17, 2003: Carbon and alloy long products;
- July 22, 2003: Carbon and alloy tubular products.

Parties intending to participate in the investigation had to apply by March 31, 2003, with deadline for requests to participate in the public hearing set for June 20, 2003.¹⁶ The ITC advises that “parties” refers generally to petitioners and respondents during the Section 201 injury and remedy hearings of 2001.

In deciding whether to take action to “reduce, modify or terminate” safeguard measures after receiving the ITC report, the President, as explained in the 1988 legislative history of amendments to this section of the law, may base his decision either on:

- “changed circumstances that warrant such reduction, modification or termination; or”
- “a majority of representatives of the domestic industry request such reduction, modification or termination the basis that the domestic industry has made a positive adjustment to import competition.”

The statute provides that a “changed circumstances” determination may be made on the basis that either: (i) “the domestic industry has not made adequate efforts to make a positive adjustment to import competition, or – (ii) “the effectiveness of the action taken ... has been impaired by changed economic circumstances.”¹⁷ The legislative history further elaborates that changed economic circumstances may include developments “such as substantial shifts in currency exchange rates or attempts to circumvent the action taken.”¹⁸ In making a determination on these bases, the President is required to take into account the ITC report and must also seek the advice of the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Labor. The steel industry opposed Rep. Knollenberg’s view of the price impact of the safeguards, and believes that the emphasis on the interests of the consumer in H.Con.Res. 23 and similar measures is misplaced.¹⁹

In March 2003 the House Ways and Means Committee took two steps responsive to industry concerns on the impact of the steel safeguards. On March 18, 2003, the Chairman of the committee, Representative William Thomas, requested that the ITC, under the authority of its general investigative powers (Section 332(g) of the Trade Act of 1930), prepare a separate report on “the current competitive

¹⁶ USITC. *Steel: Monitoring Developments in the Domestic Industry* (Investigation no. TA-204-9), March 10, 2003. See also *AMM*, March 13, 2003.

¹⁷ 19 USC 2254(b)(1)(A).

¹⁸ 100th Cong., 2nd Sess. H.Rept. 100-576. *Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988: Conference Report to Accompany H.R. 3* (April 20, 1988), p. 688.

¹⁹ See quote from Dan DiMicco, Chairman of the American Iron and Steel Institute (AISI) and CEO of Nucor in AISI. *Steel Works News Digest*, Feb. 4, 2003.

conditions facing the steel consuming industries in the United States, with respect to the tariffs imposed by the President on March 5, 2002.” Chairman Thomas specifically requested that this report be completed no later than the Section 204 mid-point report (September 2003) and be issued with it as a single document.²⁰

A few days later, on March 26, 2003, the Trade Subcommittee of Ways and Means, chaired by Representative Philip Crane, held a hearing on the impact of the Section 201 steel safeguard measures. The hearing listened to testimony of more than two dozen witnesses, including House Members, representatives of the steel industry and its major union, numerous manufacturers who detailed how their business had been hurt since the Section 201 tariffs entered into force, and similar comments from representatives from Houston and the port of New Orleans.²¹ Speaking at the hearing, Rep. Knollenberg stated that all he was seeking in his resolution was “balance” in ITC reporting on the effects of the safeguard tariffs. With Chairman Thomas’ request to the ITC, he continued, “I am happy to say the request in my resolution has been fulfilled.”²²

In his opening statement at the hearing, Trade Subcommittee Ranking Member Sander Levin was more concerned that the Thomas request “indicated a clear predisposition against the safeguard relief.”²³ The Ranking Members of the Senate Finance and House Ways and Means Committees, Senator Max Baucus and Representative Charles Rangel, expressed their “serious concern” about Rep. Thomas’ request in a joint letter to the Chairman of the ITC. While in their letter they did “not mean to suggest that the [ITC] should not conduct the 332 investigation requested,” they further noted that “as a legal matter, a request by one congressional committee cannot amend a statute ...” In their analysis:

The statute on its face neither provides for nor contemplates an examination of the kind called for by the 332 request letter, a conclusion that is only reinforced by a review of the legislative history. Indeed, under Section 204(b), it is not clear how any such information could, consistent with law, be considered by the President in his decision whether to reduce, modify or terminate relief. Therefore, it is not possible as a legal matter for the Commission to comply with the request in the 332 letter to combine the 332 report and the 204 midterm review.”²⁴

²⁰ Letter from Rep. William Thomas to USITC Chair Deanna Tanner Okun, Mar. 18, 2003.

²¹ See committee website, [<http://waysandmeans.house.gov/hearings>], for a complete list of witnesses. Most of the prepared testimony was reported online by *Inside US Trade* on March 26, 2003.

²² Rep. Joe Knollenberg. “Testimony Before House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade, March 26, 2003,” released by his office.

²³ *DER*, “Crane calls for Constructive Dialogue on Tariffs Between Steel Producers, Users” (Mar. 27, 2003).

²⁴ Letter from Sen. Max Baucus and Rep. Charles Rangel to Chairman Deanna Tanner Okun, USITC, March 25, 2003.

Other Legislative Measures Affecting the Steel Industry

Presidential action under Section 201 has been far from the only action taken or proposed under U.S. law in defense of the interests of the domestic steel industry. This section of the report reviews:

- Actions undertaken by or for the domestic steel industry under U.S. trade remedy laws beyond the Bush Administration safeguard measures;
- The application and impact of other measures passed in recent years to assist the steel industry;
- Other issues, particularly legacy cost relief, which have been proposed and considered for legislative action.

Antidumping and Countervailing Duties

The U.S. steel industry has filed numerous petitions under existing U.S. antidumping and countervailing duty (AD/CVD) trade law. In a report written in 2002, Edward Gresser of the Progressive Policy Institute calculated, based on Commerce Department data, that, "...About 130 of the nearly 260 antidumping orders now in force, affecting 32 different countries, are on steel products; likewise, 30 out of the 50 countervailing duty orders in force affect steel."²⁵

AD/CVD cases are still being filed while the Section 201 safeguard tariffs are in place. For example, furnace coke producers, whose product was not covered in the Bush Administration 201 case, instead filed an antidumping case against products from Japan and China. In this case the ITC in early August 2001 voted 3-2 against an injury determination.²⁶ On September 28, 2001, four major U.S. integrated steel producers (Bethlehem, U.S. Steel, LTV, and National Steel), who supply the majority of domestically produced cold-rolled steel, filed an antidumping case against cold-rolled imports from 20 countries. According to a Bethlehem Steel statement, "Imports from these countries now represent over 80% of all imports of cold-rolled steel products." The petitioners also filed a subsidy case against four of the countries (Argentina, Brazil, France and Korea).²⁷ Meanwhile, the Department of Commerce found that nine countries are dumping hot-rolled steel in the United States and that producers in four countries are receiving countervailable subsidies. The ITC has subsequently found material injury in these cases, thereby allowing final AD/CVD

²⁵ Edward Gresser, *Kind to Be Cruel* (Progressive Policy Institute report, April 2002), p. 3.

²⁶ *AMM*, August 13 and September 25, 2001.

²⁷ *DER*, "U.S. Producers File Trade Case Against Cold-Rolled Steel Exporters," October 1, 2001; *AMM*, October 2, 2001.

duties to be imposed.²⁸ On April 3, 2002, the Commerce Department announced preliminary antidumping duties of as much as 370% on wire rod imports from seven countries. The ITC on October 2, 2002, voted in favor of a positive finding of injury from imports in this case, despite the continued existence of Section 201 remedy relief dating from 2000.²⁹

Other countries have criticized U.S. AD/CVD laws, and have alleged that the application and administration of the laws may infringe U.S. WTO obligations. The United States has recently lost two WTO cases related to steel that were critical of U.S. AD/CVD laws, including the seldom-used 1916 Antidumping Act authorizing a private right of action and criminal penalties for dumping (Section 801 of the Revenue Act of 1916, 15 USC 72). The outcome of these cases may require the United States to amend its laws or provide compensation to the complaining parties.³⁰

Legislation to repeal the 1916 Antidumping Act was introduced in the House in 2002, but never reached the House floor. On March 4, 2003, Representative James Sensenbrenner, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and Representative Thomas, Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, introduced H.R. 1073 to accomplish the same purpose.³¹ WTO dispute settlement panels have also ruled against the way U.S. law was applied in two countervailing duty cases involving EU member countries and in an AD/CVD case involving cut-to-length steel plate from India.³²

The ITC's denial of injury claims in three consecutive steel antidumping cases in May-June 2002 led some observers to conclude that "the 'door is closed' to further trade relief in the wake of the Section 201 import tariffs."³³ This impression was fortified on August 27, 2002, by a negative ITC determination regarding material injury on the first five of the 20 countries charged in the big cold-rolled AD/CVD case. This decision was followed by a negative finding of injury on imports from the remaining 15 countries, as well as with respect to injury from subsidies alleged in some cases.³⁴ In a joint press release with U.S. Steel, Bethlehem Steel CEO

²⁸ *DER*, "Commerce Finds Nine Countries Are Dumping Hot-Rolled Steel," September 26, 2001; U.S. International Trade Commission. Press release 01-129 (November 2, 2001); *AMM*, November 5, 2001.

²⁹ U.S. International Trade Commission. "Carbon and Certain Alloy Steel Wire Rod from Brazil [et al.], But Not Germany, Injures U.S. Industry, Says ITC," press release 02-090. *AMM*, Apr. 3, Oct. 3 and 4, 2002; *DER*, "ITC Ruling paves Way for AD/CVD Duties on Wire Rod" (October 3, 2002).

³⁰ *DER*, "EU Wants to 'Mirror' Illegal U.S. 1916 Act, with Japan Will Make Unique WTO Request" (Jan. 9, 2002); "U.S., Japan Agree on Arbitration to Implement Hot-Rolled Steel Deadline" (Nov. 27, 2001); and, "WTO Sets Compliance Deadline for U.S. to Meet Hot-Rolled Steel Order" (Feb. 20, 2002).

³¹ See the official U.S. notice to the WTO on the introduction of this bill (WTO ref. WT/DS136/14/Add.13 – WT/DS162/17/Add.13, doc. Ref. No. 03-1203, March 7, 2003).

³² WTO cases DS212-213 and DS206, respectively. See CRS Report RL31474 for details.

³³ *AMM*, June 25, 2002.

³⁴ USITC. *Certain Cold-Rolled Steel Products from Australia, India, [et al.]* (Investigations Nos. 731-TA-965, 971-2, 979 and 981), *Determinations and Views of the Commission* (Publ.

Robert S. Miller reflected the opinion of much of the domestic steel industry when he said, “This determination is flatly at odds with President Bush’s steel program and the law...[it] moves the nation backwards, not forwards to a free trading future.”³⁵ But on behalf of steel users, CITAC’s Jon Jensen said, “Most cold-rolled steel is already covered by the Section 201 tariffs of up to 30%. As a result, U.S. cold-rolled steel prices have increased 70 to 75% and steel consumers face serious and continuing supply shortages and delays.”³⁶ Earlier in August, U.S. domestic petitioners received another setback from the trade adjudication process when a judge of the Court of International Trade vacated an ITC decision that had established antidumping duties of more than 100% against tinplate imports from Japan.³⁷

More fundamentally, Members of Congress are concerned that the U.S. Trade Representative, in reaching agreement with WTO partners to begin a new trade negotiation, has accepted that antidumping rules will in some measure be opened for discussion in that negotiation.³⁸ In response, the Senate adopted an amendment, co-sponsored by Senators Craig and Dayton, to its version of the 2002 Trade Act. The amendment would have required a separate vote on any changes to U.S. trade remedy laws negotiated at the WTO. An effort to table this amendment was defeated 61-38, despite reported veto threats by the Administration. More than 100 House Democrats, including some active on steel issues, wrote Speaker Dennis Hastert to urge inclusion of the provision in the final bill, but the measure was effectively dropped in the House-Senate conference on the legislation.³⁹ The amendment was replaced in the final bill by the establishment as a “principal negotiating objective,”

³⁴ (...continued)

No. 3536, Sept. 2001); and, *Certain Cold-Rolled Steel Products from Argentina, Belgium, [et al.]* (Investigations Nos. 701-TA-423-5 and 731-TA-964, 966-70, 973-8, 980, and 982-3), *Determinations and Views of the Commission* (Publ. No. 3551, Nov. 2002).

³⁵ U.S. Steel/Bethlehem Steel press release, “Steel Industry Condemns Unjust ITC Ruling; Decision Ignores Facts and Law,” Aug. 27, 2002.

³⁶ Quoted in *Washington Post*, August 28, 2002. See also, *DER*, “ITC Nixes Duties for Five Countries in Ruling on Cold-Rolled Steel Charges” (Aug. 28, 2002); *Inside US Trade*, “ITC Rejects Cold-Rolled Dumping Case Against Five Countries in Final Injury Vote” (Aug. 27, 2002); *Forbes.com* “Steel Panel: No Harm, No Foul” (Aug. 28, 2002); *Bloomberg News*, “U.S. Says Cold-Rolled Imports Don’t Hurt Steelmakers” (Aug. 27, 2002); *Financial Times*, August 27, 2002; *AMM*, August 28, 2002.

³⁷ *AMM*, August 13, 2002.

³⁸ See, for example, statement of Sen. Robert Byrd, *Congressional Record* (Nov. 16, 2001), pp. S11985-6. However, a House resolution initially intended to instruct USTR not to renegotiate U.S. AD/CVD laws was subsequently replaced by a more flexible version. See *Inside U.S. Trade* analysis, “House Effort Could Enable U.S. to Put Trade Laws on Table at WTO,” (Nov. 9, 2001). Contrarily, an analysis by an expert on the WTO, R.K. Morris, who attended the WTO meeting, emphasizes that the ministerial declaration allows only a narrow scope for renegotiating AD/CVD rules, “An NGO Looks Back: Lessons from the WTO’s Ministerial Meeting in Doha, Qatar,” *Global Positions*, III:1 (Jan. 7, 2002), pp. 4-5.

³⁹ *Congressional Record* (May 14, 2002), pp. S4299-4326; *DER*, “House Democrats Push to Include Dayton-Craig in Trade Conference Bill” (May 24, 2002) and “TAA Deal, Dumping of Dayton-Craig Clause Crucial to Agreement on Omnibus Trade Bill” (July 29, 2002).

preservation of “the ability of the United States to enforce rigorously its trade laws, including the antidumping, countervailing duty, and safeguard laws, and avoid agreements that lessen the effectiveness of domestic and international disciplines on unfair trade, especially dumping and subsidies, or that lessen the effectiveness of domestic and international safeguard provisions ...”⁴⁰

Clinton Administration Section 201 Case on Steel

The steel industry also gained limited import relief under Section 201 safeguard actions undertaken by the Clinton Administration in 1999-2000 regarding steel wire rod and line pipe products. The remedies were questioned under WTO procedures by Korea and the EU. The initial WTO dispute settlement panel on October 29, 2001, found that the Korean claims were partly valid, but rejected other elements of the Korean case.⁴¹ When the case was brought before the Appellate Body of the WTO, its ruling in February 2002 substantially upheld much of the Korean case. It found, in particular, that the U.S. government mishandled the exemption of NAFTA partners from the line pipe remedy tariffs and, very significantly for upcoming WTO cases on the Bush 201 remedies, had not adequately linked remedies to the actual levels of injury caused by imports as opposed to other causes. The line pipe issue was resolved with Korea on July 29, 2002, when USTR agreed that Korean exporters could have a tariff-free quota of up to 17,500 tons per quarter from September 1, 2002 (the safeguard remedy expired on March 1, 2003).⁴²

U.S. wire rod producers were disappointed that the remedies they received did not apply to NAFTA competitors, and gained a subsequent ruling from the ITC that imports from these sources are indeed a substantial cause of injury to the industry.⁴³ President Bush responded by adjusting the tariff rate quota (TRQ) to allow shares according to historical sources of imports, instead of allowing all imports to fill the TRQ on a first-come, first-served basis. The change satisfied the EU, which dropped its WTO case. The President also considered bringing NAFTA imports under quota restrictions, but decided not to do so.⁴⁴ The U.S. wire rod industry has always considered the Section 201 remedy insufficient and, as noted in the previous section, successfully brought an antidumping case against imports. Both Mexican and

⁴⁰ P.L. 107-210, §2101(b)(14)(a).

⁴¹ *DER*, “South Korea Welcomes WTO Ruling on Steel Pipe, Says Implications Wide” (October 30, 2001).

⁴² *Ibid.*, “WTO Appellate Body Upholds Ruling Against U.S. Safeguard on Line Pipe Imports,” February 19, 2002; Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. Press release 02-78, “United States and Korea Resolve WTO Dispute on Line Pipe” (July 29, 2002). The U.S. Permanent Mission to the WTO formally notified that body of the termination of these safeguards in documents G/SG/N/10/USA/4/Suppl.2 and G/SG/N/10/USA/5/Rev.1/Suppl.2, released as WTO documents 03-1683 and 03-1684 (March 24, 2003).

⁴³ *AMM*, August 23, 2001; *DER*, “ITC Says Import Surge of Wire Rod from Canada, Mexico Is Undermining Relief,” August 24, 2001.

⁴⁴ *Inside U.S. Trade*, “U.S. Carves EU Share in Wire Rod Quota, as EU Agrees to Drop Case,” November 30, 2001; *DER*, “Canada’s Pettigrew Likes Decision by United States on Wire Rod Imports,” December 4, 2001.

Canadian companies are challenging the ITC determination on injury under NAFTA dispute settlement resolution rules.⁴⁵

China Safeguards: The Steel Wire Hanger Case

When Congress established permanent normal trade relations with China in 2000, it also approved a special safeguard provision for U.S. domestic industries, which corresponded to product-specific safeguard provisions accepted by China as part of its WTO accession package. This China safeguard relief provision, added as Section 421 of the Trade Act of 1974, operates similarly to a Section 201 safeguard case. The big difference is that U.S. producers need prove only “material injury” or threat of such injury resulting from increases in imports from China – not the greater “substantial injury” standard required under Section 201. After a positive injury determination from the ITC, the USTR is authorized to negotiate agreements with China to prevent or remedy the market disruption caused by increased Chinese exports to the U.S. market, prior to a presidential determination on the application of safeguard remedies. Also, the President must apply a cost-benefit test on the national economic impact of safeguard relief as part of his decision.⁴⁶

Two cases were brought under Section 421 in 2002. The first involved pedestal actuators, an electromechanical device used to adjust seats in electrically motorized carts (known as “electrical scooters”), chiefly used by disabled persons. While the ITC found injury to the only U.S. pedestal actuator producer in a 3-2 vote, a maker of the scooters and organizations representing disabled persons opposed safeguard relief. The President decided against relief, saying “I find that import relief would have an adverse impact on the U.S. economy clearly greater than the benefits of such action.”⁴⁷

The second case, on which a presidential determination is pending, involves steel wire garment hangers. The case was brought by three producers, though other leading producers testified against injury. The ITC found unanimously in favor of a ruling of material injury. But in the relief recommendations, all the commissioners rejected a tariff of 1.8¢ per hanger requested by the petitioners, in favor of an ad valorem tariff, with three commissioners settling on a rate of 25%.⁴⁸ The Office of

⁴⁵ *DER*, “Canadian Firm Seeks NAFTA Panel on U.S. ITC’s Steel Wire Rod Ruling” (Dec. 17, 2002), and “Mexico Steelmaker Seeks NAFTA Panel on U.S. Wire Rod Antidumping Decision” (Jan. 9, 2003).

⁴⁶ 19 USC §2451.

⁴⁷ *DER*, “Bush Denies Import Curbs in First Case Applying China-Specific Trade Safeguard” (Jan. 21, 2003); *AMM*, January 23, 2003.

⁴⁸ *DER*, “ITC Investigates Wire Hangers from China under Anti-Surge Provision” (Dec. 5, 2002); and, “ITC Makes Affirmative Ruling in Wire Hanger Safeguard Case” (Jan. 28, 2003); *AMM*, Jan. 21, 2003; USITC. Publ. 3575. *Certain Steel Wire Garment Hangers from China* (Invest. TA-421-2.1), *Determination and Views of the Commission* (Feb. 2003).

the USTR has requested public comments on the ITC recommendation and other possible relief measures.⁴⁹

The Byrd Amendment (Continued Dumping and Subsidy Offset Act)

Relating in part to the ongoing financial difficulties of parts of the U.S. steel industry, the Continued Dumping and Subsidy Offset Act (CDSOA), was signed into law in October, 2000. The CDSOA is known as the “Byrd Amendment,” because the West Virginia Senator added it to the FY2001 Agriculture appropriations bill (P.L. 106-387).⁵⁰ It requires antidumping and countervailing duties to be deposited in a special account, from which the domestic industry petitioners who meet eligibility criteria may draw funds to offset expenses incurred as a result of the dumped or subsidized imports.

On June 26, 2001, the Customs Service proposed rules to implement the Byrd Amendment. A preliminary list of eligible “affected domestic producers” was identified by the ITC, based on petitioners in 400 active dumping cases. This list of 2,000 potentially eligible producers was posted on the Customs website.⁵¹ To be eligible for a distribution, producers must still be in operation and making the product for which a dumping or subsidy injury was found. Funds may be used by claimants for a wide range of purposes, including training, employee health care and pension benefits, as well as improvement of manufacturing technology and equipment, and R&D expenditures.⁵² A total of \$207 million was distributed in December, 2001, to 130 U.S. companies – about half of them steel mills and iron foundries. But individual totals in most cases were relatively small: the largest reported payouts to steel companies were about \$4 million each to Bethlehem Steel and AK Steel. The largest single payouts under the program were for \$63 million to Torrington Co. and \$31 million to Timken Co., two ball bearing manufacturers.⁵³

For FY 2002, the Customs Service distributed \$329 million in AD/CVD duties to qualifying petitioners. During 2002, Timken acquired the Torrington ball bearing division from its parent company, Ingersoll-Rand. The two companies, which are in the process of merging, are together by far the largest recipient of FY 2002 Byrd Amendment disbursements, at nearly \$127 million.⁵⁴ Another group of big winners is a small group of U.S. candle manufacturers, which could share up to \$65 million in collected duties owing to a successful antidumping case against Chinese imports,

⁴⁹ 68 *Federal Register* 10765-67 (March 6, 2003).

⁵⁰ Included as Title X; codified at 19 USC §1671a.

⁵¹ See [<http://www.customs.gov/news/fed-reg/notices/dumping.pdf>].

⁵² 66 *Federal Register*, pp. 33920-26 (June 26, 2001); pp. 40782-40800 (Aug. 3, 2001); pp. 48546-55 (Sept. 21, 2001); and, p. 49451 (Sept. 27, 2001).

⁵³ U.S. Customs Service. “U.S. Customs Publishes List of First Disbursements under the Continued Dumping and Subsidy Offset Act of 2000,” press release (Jan. 30, 2002), and list, “CDSOA FY2001 Disbursements by Claimant;” *AMM*, April 8, 2002.

⁵⁴ *Waterbury Republican-American*, December 31, 2002.

pending the outcome of a lawsuit in the case.⁵⁵ By contrast, the many steel company claimants shared about 20% of the disbursements, according to an *American Metal Market* calculation; the top recipient among them was U.S. Steel at \$5.9 million.⁵⁶

U.S. trading partners believe that diversion of antidumping and countervailing duties from importers to a competing domestic industry, as under the Byrd Amendment, contravenes WTO rules. The European Union, Japan, Canada, and eight other U.S. trading partners initiated a WTO dispute settlement proceeding. On July 17, 2002, the interim report of the WTO dispute settlement panel found against the United States and concluded that the only conceivable and effective remedy would be to repeal the law altogether, a conclusion confirmed in the final report of September 16. Senator Byrd issued a statement that he found the WTO ruling “appalling” and immediately requested that USTR Zoellick file an appeal, which the Bush Administration subsequently did.⁵⁷

The substance of the initial decision was reaffirmed by the WTO Appellate Body on January 16, 2003. It found that the CDSOA is a “specific action” against dumping, which is prohibited under WTO rules, though it reversed the panel’s ruling that the existence of the disbursement mechanism encourages companies to file AD/CVD petitions in a manner that undermines the industry support requirements in WTO agreements. In confirming the earlier ruling, however, the Appellate Body did not call for outright repeal as the only solution to the problem of the Byrd Amendment being out of compliance with WTO rules. In responding to the Appellate Body decision and to its confirmation by the WTO Dispute Settlement Body, U.S. Ambassador to the WTO Linnet Deily refrained from commenting on repeal of the law, but did say that the United States would “implement [the ruling] in a manner that respects U.S. WTO obligations.” Meanwhile, the Office of the USTR quickly noted that the outcome of the case did not adversely affect U.S. ability to enforce its AD/CVD laws.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Cincinnati Post*, January 3, 2003.

⁵⁶ *AMM*, “Steelmakers Snack on a Smaller Slice of ‘Byrd Money’ Pie” (Jan. 20, 2003 print ed.). For the official list, see U.S. Customs Service. *CDSO FY2002 Disbursements by Claimant/State* (Jan. 30, 2003).

⁵⁷ *Inside U.S. Trade*, “Nine U.S. Trading Partners File WTO Request on Byrd Law,” July 13, 2001; *DER*, “WTO Members Outline Case Against Byrd Amendment; First Hearing Set for February” (Dec. 10, 2001); “WTO Panel Shoots Down Byrd Amendment in Preliminary Ruling, Urges Straight Repeal” (July 18, 2002); “WTO Issues Final Ruling Condemning Byrd Amendment” (Sept. 4, 2002); and, “U.S. Must Repeal Byrd Amendment, WTO Concludes in Its Official Report” (Sept. 17, 2002); *Inside US Trade*, “WTO Interim Panel Rules Against Byrd Law Distributing Duties to Private Parties,” July 17, 2002; Sen. Robert C. Byrd, “Byrd Blasts WTO Ruling as Undermining Congressional Authority,” (press release) July 17, 2002;

⁵⁸ *Inside US Trade*, “WTO Appellate Body Condemns Byrd Law as U.S. Considers Repeal” (Jan. 17, 2003); *AMM*, Jan. 17, 2003; *DER*, “Appellate Panel Upholds WTO Decision Against Byrd Amendment; EU Seeks Repeal” (Jan. 17, 2003); and, “WTO Adopts Byrd Amendment Ruling; U.S. Urged to Repeal Dumping Fees Law”(Jan. 28, 2003) . For a good summary analysis of the Appellate Body decision, see Eliza Patterson, “World Trade (continued...)”

Members of Congress quickly reacted to the Appellate Body decision. Seventy Senators signed on to a letter that asserted, "... The WTO has acted beyond the scope of its mandate by finding violations where none exists and where no obligations were negotiated." The Senators urged that the Bush Administration respond with three specific actions:

- "To seek express recognition of the existing right of WTO Members to distribute monies collected from AD/CV duties."
- "To promptly integrate the Administration's response to this WTO decision into the strategy announced in the administration's recent [December 2002] Report to Congress on the WTO Dispute Settlement Process."
- "To consult closely with Congress on the particulars of any approach taken in negotiations on this issue."⁵⁹

But the 2004 budget proposed by President Bush proposed repeal of the Byrd Amendment. The President's FY 2004 budget message did not directly reference the WTO decision, but argued that the Byrd Amendment disbursements were:

... Corporate subsidies [that] effectively provide a significant "double-dip" benefit to industries that already gain protection from the increased import prices provided by countervailing tariffs. While the Administration does not believe that these payments are inconsistent with U.S. treaty obligations, repeal of the provision would allow the funds to be directed to higher priority uses.⁶⁰

In reports on the meeting of the WTO Dispute Settlement Body on February 26, 2003, regarding the Appellate Body decision and its implementation, the U.S. representative reiterated that the United States would implement the decision, though it requested a "reasonable period" to comply with the ruling. Some trading partners reportedly emphasized in reply the conclusion of the initial panel report that the only satisfactory means of compliance is repeal of the statute. Parties should reach a mutual agreement on the compliance deadline within 45 days of the adoption by the

⁵⁸ (...continued)

Organization Ruling on US Continued Dumping and Offset Act of 2000 (CDSOA)," *ASIL Insights* (American Society of International Law), February 2003.

⁵⁹ Letter of Feb. 4, 2003, to President George W. Bush, signed by 70 U.S. Senators. For additional reaction, see *AMM*, "Steel Backers Circle Wagons after WTO Shoots Down Byrd" (Jan. 20, 2003 print ed.); *DER*, "Senate Staffers See No Chance of Repeal of Byrd Law Following WTO Condemnation" (Feb. 14, 2003).

⁶⁰ Office of Management and Budget. *Budget of the United States Government. Fiscal Year 2004*, p. 240. See also, *Inside US Trade*, "Presidential Budget Proposes Repeal of Byrd Law Reimbursing Petitioners" (Feb. 3, 2003); and, *AMM*, "Bush Budget Plucks Byrd Tariff Payouts" (Feb. 10, 2003 print ed.).

WTO of the ruling, or the Director-General of the WTO may be called in to set the date if the parties cannot agree.⁶¹

The Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee Act of 1999

This law (P.L. 106-51) established a program to guarantee loans for restructuring and modernizing steel companies that were financially distressed following the 1997-98 import surge and industry financial crisis. The program guarantees steel industry loans by private-sector financial institutions up to a total of \$1 billion (maximum of \$250 million per company). The program is operated independently under the auspices of the Commerce Department; its three-member board, which must approve all applications for guarantees, consists of representatives of the Secretary of Commerce, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, and the Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

In the original version of the program, the guaranteed loans could carry a maturity date no later than the end of 2005. The 107th Congress approved in October 2001 an amendment in the FY 2002 Interior appropriations law (P.L. 107-63, Section 336) to extend and modify the Steel Loan Guarantee Program. It prolonged by 10 years, to the end of 2015, the deadline by when loans guaranteed under the program must be repaid. The amendment also provided that the portion of a loan covered by a guarantee may be increased from the present level of 85% to 90% or 95%, provided that no more than \$100 million in total loans may be outstanding at any one time under program guarantees at each of the higher guarantee rates, nor may any single loan at each higher rate be greater than \$50 million. The amendment extended the authority for loan guarantees to be issued through 2003.⁶²

In practice, the loan guarantee program has not played a major role in alleviating industry problems. It has issued only two loan guarantees that companies have subsequently been able to take up. Moreover, Geneva Steel, which received the larger loan of \$110 million, has defaulted and is in liquidation.⁶³

The changes adopted in October 2001 did not enable LTV, the third-largest integrated steelmaker, to gain a loan under the program and avoid the Chapter 7 liquidation process in 2002. The steelmaker was in the process of negotiating a \$250 million loan with its bankers and the Steel Loan Board, when the prospects of the industry suddenly worsened after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the

⁶¹ *DER*, "U.S. Wants 'Reasonable Period' to Comply with Byrd Amendment Ruling" (Feb. 27, 2003).

⁶² *Congressional Record*, July 12, 2001, pp. S7559-60, S7566; see also *Congress Daily PM*, "Senate GOP Refusing to Agree to Approps Time Limits," July 17, 2001; and, *Inside U.S. Trade*, "Senate Approves Steel Program with Better Loan Terms for Companies" (July 20, 2001); *AMM*, October 12, 2001. Because of requirements to perform due diligence on applications, the Steel Loan Board has announced that all applications must be filed by June 30, 2003; *AMM*, March 12, 2003. On problems previously identified with the program, see General Accounting Office report, *Financial Management: Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee Program* (GAO-01-714R).

⁶³ OMB. *FY 2004 Budget.*, p. 69.

further downturn in the economic situation. Negotiations ensued between the company, its creditors, the United Steelworkers union (USWA), the Steel Loan Board and other interested parties, particularly the City of Cleveland. But they ultimately failed to create a package that lenders and the Steel Loan Board believed that the company was likely to repay. In late November, 2001, LTV's management asked the bankruptcy court for permission to liquidate. LTV was able to agree to leave its blast furnaces on "hot idle" status, making them less expensive to restart, but retirees and employees lost their health care and other benefits, except for what is covered by the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation. Ultimately the steelmaking assets were acquired out of liquidation at the end of February 2002 and restarted as the International Steel Group.⁶⁴

LTV's closure in late 2001 stimulated a number of legislative initiatives to ease further the conditions for Steel Loan Program guarantees. A petition was filed in the House to discharge from committee the sweeping Steel Revitalization Act (discussed further below), which contained a provision to expand the Steel Loan Guarantee Program dramatically. The petition did not gain sufficient signatories to force floor consideration. On November 28, 2001, Representative Peter Visclosky attempted to add an amendment to the FY 2002 Defense appropriations bill that would have established a three-year, \$2.4 billion government entitlement program for steel companies seeking to cover retiree health care obligations. He was supported on the floor by a number of other Members, but his amendment was ruled out of order and he withdrew it.⁶⁵ On December 6, 2001, Representative Steven LaTourette and three co-sponsors introduced a bill that would allow the Steel Loan Guarantee Board to waive the requirement that a borrowing company must have good prospects for paying back guaranteed loans, provided that a number of other conditions were met. On December 20, 2001, Senator Paul Wellstone with six co-sponsors, and Rep. Visclosky in the House, introduced companion versions of a different steel loan guarantee reform measure. It would have required a "fair likelihood" that prospective industry borrowers repay loans, but would mitigate the requirement by allowing forecasts to "assume vigorous and timely enforcement of our trade laws and general prosperity in the economy ..." The bill also would have raised the limit on a loan to any one company to \$350 million and increased the maximum share of a loan that can be guaranteed to 95%. None of these bills was acted on at either the committee level or the floor of either body.⁶⁶

The Bush Administration essentially considers the program a failure. It has proposed rescinding the remaining federal outlays required to back up any future steel loan guarantees in both the FY 2003 and FY 2004 federal budgets. "Despite the difficult market conditions [for the steel industry], there has been little demand for the program," the FY 2004 budget proposal noted, and the Geneva Steel default left "taxpayers to pick up the loss." The Administration had recommended rescinding

⁶⁴ See Cooney, CRS Report RL31748, p. 12.

⁶⁵ *Congressional Record* (Nov. 28, 2001), pp. H8519-23; *AMM*, November 30, 2001

⁶⁶ For a discussion of bills in the 107th Congress to amend the Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee program, see Stephen Cooney, CRS Report RL31107 *Steel Industry and Trade Issues* (last updated Oct. 10, 2002), pp. 58-60.

\$96 million in outlays for Steel Loan Guarantee program loan guarantees, and proposed rescission of the remaining \$26 million in “no-year” outlays in the FY 2004 budget.⁶⁷ Such measures would in effect terminate the program, even with most outstanding loan guarantee authority still unused, because no funds would be available to back up a loan default, as occurred in the Geneva Steel case. However, the FY 2003 Consolidated Appropriations Resolution (H.J.Res. 2) approved by Congress in February 2003 and signed into law by President Bush did not include the requested \$96 million rescission for the Steel Loan Guarantee program.

As the Steel Loan Guarantee program continues in operation, Representative Bart Stupak on February 5, 2003 introduced H.R. 629, which would seek to prevent loans guaranteed by the program from benefitting foreign iron ore and steel production. The bill provides that no proceeds from a loan guaranteed under the program may be invested in a foreign iron or steel production facility. It would also not allow such proceeds to be used to pay for imports of iron ore or semi-finished steel from any country subject to U.S. trade remedies related to iron and steel.

In a closely watched decision, the Steel Loan Board on February 28, 2003, initially rejected the application of Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel for a loan guarantee. The company has been in bankruptcy for two years, and had hoped to use the federal loan guarantee to help modernize its steelmaking operations by the installation of an electric arc furnace. The company in its annual financial statement had said that its restructuring under Chapter 11 was “contingent on the approval of a \$250 million loan guarantee” from the Board. But the Steel Loan Board reportedly “was unconvinced the company had the earning potential to pay the loan.”⁶⁸

The company re-applied almost immediately with an amended loan guarantee request. Reportedly, the states of Ohio and West Virginia, which are financing \$27 million of the total loan package, agreed to ease their repayment terms, and the company’s suppliers also agreed to finance \$8 million of the non-guaranteed portion of the loan. These improved terms apparently led the Board to reverse its decision and approve the guarantee, though the funds will not be released until the company has emerged from Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.⁶⁹

Export-Import Bank Loans

Members of the 107th Congress became seriously concerned over the possibly negative impact on U.S. steel producers of loans made or guaranteed by the U.S. Export-Import Bank (Exim) for transactions benefitting foreign competitors. This concern led to modification of Exim economic impact review procedures, after a

⁶⁷ OMB. *FY 2004 Budget Proposal*, p. 69. See also *Inside US Trade*, “Bush Budget Proposal Seeks Elimination of Funding for Steel Loan Program” (Feb. 4, 2003); *AMM*, “Default Prods Call to Nix Steel Loan Funds” (Feb. 10, 2003).

⁶⁸ Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel Corp. “Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel Announces Results for 2002,” press release, Feb. 24, 2003; *Herald-Star* (Steubenville, OH), March 2-3, 2003; *Wall Street Journal*, March 3, 2003.

⁶⁹ Association of Iron & Steel Engineers. *Steel News*, “Wheeling-Pitt’s Loan Guarantee Is Approved” (March 27, 2003); *AMM*, March 28, 2003.

December 2000 loan guarantee of \$18 million, over the reported objections of the Clinton Administration, to upgrade the Benxi, China steel mill, which the Commerce Department subsequently found to be dumping in the U.S. market.

The Senate Banking Committee on July 18, 2001, considered an amendment to the Exim reauthorization bill to prevent it from lending to any project associated with a foreign company accused of dumping, although the amendment was withdrawn. Meanwhile, Exim itself on July 16, 2001, had announced proposed modifications to its procedures for consideration of potentially adverse U.S. domestic economic impact of proposed Exim loans and guarantees. On the House side, Representatives Peter Visclosky and Alan Mollohan co-sponsored an amendment to the FY 2002 Foreign Operations appropriations bill to reduce Exim support, which passed by a vote of 258-162. The amendment transferred \$18 million from Exim to the child health and survival programs in Title II of the same bill.⁷⁰

On September 20, 2001, Exim announced the changes to its revised procedures. It decided not to prohibit outright financing for a company subject to a preliminary AD or CVD investigation, but that such an investigation is a “potential indicator” of commodity oversupply. It would serve as a “yellow flashing light,” though not a “stop sign,” for a proposed transaction. The next day Representative Patrick Toomey offered an amendment in a Financial Services subcommittee markup of the Exim reauthorization bill, to ban financing for “any entity” subject to AD/CVD and Section 201 investigations. This amendment was criticized by supporters of Exim and U.S. business interests and lost by a single vote (11-10).⁷¹ He then reintroduced a modified version of his amendment at the full committee level on October 31, 2001, and this version was approved by voice vote.⁷²

Final action on Exim reauthorization was not agreed until late May 2002. It was approved by the House on June 5, 2002, on a vote of 344-78, and by the Senate on a voice vote the next day. The bill reauthorizing Exim through FY2006 was signed into law by President Bush as P.L. 107-189.⁷³ Exim is now prohibited by statute from providing a loan or guarantee “for the resulting production of substantially the same product that is the subject of” either a preliminary AD/CVD order or a Section 201 injury determination. Exim was also required to establish procedures to insure that any loans to such entities do not result in increased imports of “substantially the same products” as are under investigation.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ *Congressional Record*, July 24, 2001, pp. H-4437-47.

⁷¹ *DER*, “House Panel Narrowly Defeats Amendment Restricting Exim Funding,” September 24, 2001.

⁷² *DER*, “Exim Bank Reauthorization Bill Clears House Panel with New Restrictions on Loans,” November 1, 2001.

⁷³ *AMM*, May 24, 2002; *DER*, “Short-Term Exim Extension Expected, as Lawmakers Complete Conference Bill” (May 23, 2002) and “Exim Bank Conference Report Cleared for President’s Signature” (June 11, 2002).

⁷⁴ P.L. 107-189 §18.

Exim quickly aroused further interest under the new rules, specifically with reference to a proposed \$19 million loan for an export of steel pickling equipment from a Texas company, Delta Brands Inc. (DBI), to the Turkish steel company Erdemir. Critics charged that the equipment would increase the capacity of the Turkish mill's production, although Turkey had been specifically granted a developing country exemption from U.S. steel safeguard tariffs for most products. Rep. Toomey protested the Turkish deal to Exim and the Exim board on August 15, 2002, voted not to proceed with the deal. American Iron and Steel Institute (AISI) president Andrew Sharkey expressed approval of the outcome, but DBI's president emphasized in a letter to President Bush that the rejection would aid his European competitors, while he was also losing business to them among U.S. steelmakers.⁷⁵

The House Appropriations Committee in its report on approving the Foreign Operations appropriations bill stated that it "expects the Export-Import Bank to report back to the Committee any steel-related proposals posted on the agenda of the Export-Import Bank's Board."⁷⁶ On November 26, 2002, Exim announced a further redrafting of its economic impact review procedures, pursuant to the changes in its charter made in the reauthorization of June 2002.⁷⁷ Exim has now established "screens" to determine if proposed transactions may be associated with specific legislative prohibitions and a potential cause of substantial injury to the U.S. economy. If a subject capital goods export will enable a foreign buyer to establish or expand production of an exportable good, the transaction is further analyzed under one of the following three categories:

- Capital goods transactions relating to products *not* subject to final or preliminary U.S. trade remedy actions are subject to a "detailed economic impact analysis," if the transaction value is more than \$10 million and if the establishment or expansion of foreign production capacity totals 1% or more of U.S. production.
- Transactions subject to "final trade measures" are subject to automatic prohibition, without any detailed economic analysis, unless the applicant can show that the exporter or the U.S. economy will be "extraordinarily harmed" by denial of Exim support. Final Board action on such a determination would require a 14-day public notice and comment period.
- Transactions over \$5 million that are subject to preliminary AD/CVD injury determinations or over \$10 million that are subject to a Section 201 investigation initiated by the executive or legislative branch (but not private parties) must be provided a 14-day notice and

⁷⁵ *AMM*, July 29 and Aug. 1, 16 and 26 (print ed.), 2002; *DER*, "Export-Import Bank Denies Loan Guarantee for Exports to Turkish Steel Plant" (August 16, 2002).

⁷⁶ House Report 107-663, p. 6; similar language was adopted in the manager's statement on the FY2003 Consolidated Appropriations Resolution (H.Rept. 108-10, p. 934), signed into law as P.L. 108-7 by President Bush on Feb. 20, 2003.

⁷⁷ Export-Import Bank of the U.S. "Ex-Im Bank Revises Economic Impact Procedures," press release, November 26, 2002.

comment period. If, based on comments received, the Exim staff determines that the transaction “poses the risk of substantial injury,” then it will not go forward until Exim has conducted a detailed economic impact analysis.⁷⁸

National Security and Defense Issues

The role of steel in U.S. national security has been raised frequently during discussions of various steel-related issues. In particular, a number of Members of Congress mentioned the issue during appearances before the ITC.

Steel Industry Report on National Defense and Economic Security.

On December 6, 2001, three steel industry associations, in cooperation with the United Steelworkers (USWA), issued a special report emphasizing the critical role of steel in U.S. national defense and economic security. The report examined the direct and indirect uses of steel that are critical both in direct defense applications and to “U.S. economic and infrastructure security.” The report claims that even opponents of industry trade relief acknowledge the importance of specialty steels in defense applications, such as the F-22 and F-18 E/F jet fighters, but that only a broad and commercially viable domestic steel industry can remain a reliable collaborator with the Defense Department, or in programs such as the Specialty Metals Processing Consortium with Sandia National Laboratory. The report estimates that 5.5 million tons of steel are directly or indirectly utilized annually in all forms of defense applications. Beyond such direct Defense Department procurement use, the report also stresses the role of steel in maintaining infrastructure critical for U.S. economic security. The report argues that foreign sources cannot be relied upon with respect to either price or timeliness, if a broad and viable domestic steel industry is not maintained.⁷⁹

The Section 232 Investigation on National Security. Under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, the President may act to “adjust imports,” if the Secretary of Commerce has found that they threaten to impair national security. Among the criteria for determining the effect on national security are the effect on “the economic welfare of any domestic industry essential to our national security” and the “displacement of any domestic products causing substantial unemployment...” Administrations have rarely taken positive action under Section 232, although in 1979 and 1982, Section 232 was used as the legal basis to ban oil imports from Iran and Libya.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* “Fact Sheet: Economic Impact Procedures” (March 2003).

⁷⁹ *A Strong U.S. Steel Industry: Critical to National Defense and Economic Security.* Jointly issued by AISI, Specialty Steel Industry of North America, Steel Manufacturers Association and USWA (December, 2001).

⁸⁰ U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of Export Administration, Office of Strategic Industries and Economic Security. *Section 232 Investigations: The Effects of Imports on the National Security* (January, 2001).

In January 2001, Representatives James Oberstar and Bart Stupak wrote then-Secretary of Commerce Norman Mineta to request a Section 232 investigation into the upstream iron ore and semi-finished steel industries, which have been under heavy pressure from import competition.⁸¹ On February 1, 2001, the Commerce Department announced that it was initiating an investigation under this provision to “determine the effects on the national security of imports of iron ore and semi-finished steel.” The report was released to the public on January 9, 2002. It concluded that while iron ore and semi-finished steel were important to U.S. national security, “imports of these items do not threaten to impair U.S. national security.” The report found that 20% of U.S. iron ore and 7% of semi-finished steel are imported. Even though one major iron ore mine was in the process of closing, sufficient other capacity exists to secure a domestic source of supply for the long term, the report found. Moreover, the primary sources of imports were Canada, Mexico and Brazil, all nations with which the United States has friendly relations, and one of which is a close military ally.⁸²

The Defense Department (DOD) participated in the Section 232 process. It estimated that its demands for iron and steel for weapons systems are a small portion of the domestic industries’ annual output: 325,000 tons annually, or about 0.3% of the total. Current demand was based on earlier defense plans to be able to maintain a “two major theater war,” but as the quadrennial defense review had moved away from this standard, it was probable that DOD demand would be flat or lower for steel over the next five years, according to the Commerce Department report. The final report noted a wide variety of steel usage in other products procured by DOD, but stated that for all of these uses, domestic production levels were easily sufficient to meet industry needs. Furthermore, the report also noted that about half of this general domestic supply was met by minimills, which do not use iron ore or imported semi-finished slabs. Based on these findings, the Commerce Department recommended no action under Section 232 of the Trade Act.⁸³

Reps. Stupak and Oberstar criticized the Commerce Department finding, as both noted continuing closures and pressure from imports in the iron ore and steel industries. USWA president Leo Gerard believed the findings incompatible with statements made by President Bush and Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge regarding the national security importance of the steel industry.⁸⁴

Steel Issues in Defense Procurement. The House passed on November 28, 2001, the FY 2002 Defense appropriations bill, which contained a provision to require that “steel; or equipment, products or systems that are necessary to national security or national defense and that are made of steel” use only steel that is “melted

⁸¹ Text of letter in *Inside U.S. Trade* (January 26, 2001).

⁸² U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Export Administration. *The Effect of Imports of Iron Ore and Semi-Finished Steel on National Security* (October 2001).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-16, 37.

⁸⁴ *DER*, “Iron Ore/Semi-Finished Steel Imports Not Seen Threatening National Security,” Jan. 10, 2002; and “USWA Blasts Administration Ruling on Imports of Iron Ore, Semi-Finished Steel,” Jan. 11, 2002.

or poured in the United States...”⁸⁵ This provision is much more sweeping than existing language in the Defense acquisition regulations, based on previous legislation. The Senate version of the bill contained a provision that was based on the narrower existing law and regulations. It refers only to “carbon, alloy or armor steel plate,” and requires that such products must be “melted and rolled” in the United States (and Canada) to be eligible for procurement using DOD acquisition funds. The Senate language was adopted and included in the final Defense appropriations bill, which was signed into law by President Bush on January 10, 2002.⁸⁶

In the Second Session of the 107th Congress, a bill was introduced similar to the House-passed requirement of November 2001. But the FY2003 Defense appropriations bill approved in both Houses and which President Bush signed into law contains a provision similar to that included previously, limited to carbon steel armor and armor plate.⁸⁷ On February 5, 2003, Reps. Stupak and LaTourette introduced H.R. 628, which once again proposed the broad prohibition on Defense Department procurement of equipment made with foreign steel.

In the FY2003 Military Construction appropriations law, there is also a new provision which requires that “American steel producers, fabricators and manufacturers” must have the opportunity to compete for steel procurement in any military construction project.⁸⁸

Not directly related to defense issues, but within the House version of the Coast Guard appropriation for FY2003, a provision established a form of preference for U.S.-made “steel, iron and manufactured products” in projects designed to alter bridges for navigation purposes. This provision was included in the final FY2003 consolidated appropriations law. Funding for such projects is made contingent upon use of U.S.-produced products, “unless contrary to law or international agreement, or unless the Commandant of the Coast Guard determines such action to be inconsistent with the public interest or the cost unreasonable.”⁸⁹

Industry and Legacy Cost Relief Legislation

The following section reviews some of the more widely discussed bills introduced in the 107th Congress, which sought to address the threat posed by steel company bankruptcies to employee health care and pension benefits (“legacy costs”). The legacy cost problem, including effects on industry consolidation and the impact on worker and retiree benefits, is discussed in detail in CRS Report RL31748. That report describes how the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA) was expanded in

⁸⁵ Section 8158, H.R. 3338.

⁸⁶ P.L. 107-117 §8033 (See House Conference Report 107-350).

⁸⁷ P.L. 107-248 §8030.

⁸⁸ P.L. 107-249 §108.

⁸⁹ Conference Report on H.J.Res. 2 (H.Rept. 108-10), Division I, Title I (p. 381, “Alteration of Bridges”).

the Trade Act of 2002 to provide limited relief in covering the health care costs of retired steelworkers and others who receive pensions through the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. The USWA and many Members of Congress do not believe that this measure adequately addresses the loss of benefits by steel workers and retirees.

The Steel Revitalization Act. This measure was introduced in the House by Representatives Peter Visclosky and Jack Quinn on behalf of the Congressional Steel Caucus. It was a comprehensive measure addressing the issues that affect the steel industry. The bill had 228 House co-sponsors by April 2002. A companion bill was introduced in the Senate by Senator Paul Wellstone and three co-sponsors.⁹⁰

The Steel Revitalization Act had four titles. Title I would have required the President to establish import quotas on steel products for five years and was an expanded version of a bill that passed the House in 1999. It was effectively rendered moot by President Bush's Section 201 trade remedies. Title II would have established a 1.5% sales tax on U.S.-made steel products and imports to finance the health care benefits of steelworker retirees ("legacy costs"). It would also have established a fund for covering these costs, a federal board to administer a health care program for steel workers, and eligibility rules for participation in these programs. As the projected pool of eligible steel workers shrank, the special tax would have been automatically reduced until it was phased out. This approach to the legacy cost problem was strongly supported by the USWA, but not by steel companies or the industry's trade associations. The Steel Manufacturers Association (SMA), which represents minimills as a group, actively opposed this approach. It argued that "government assistance to troubled steel companies for continued operation or legacy costs is unacceptable. That assistance is unfair to those steel companies who are not troubled."⁹¹

Title III of this legislation would have modified and extended the Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee Act of 1999. Some parts of this measure were incorporated into the amendments to the Steel Loan Guarantee program discussed earlier, but the major expansion of the program with a \$10 billion authorization that this bill proposed was not included. Title IV would have created a new environmental compliance grant program for merged steel companies worth up to \$100 million per company.

As mentioned earlier, the LTV liquidation process in late 2001 and early 2002 led to a discharge petition being filed in the House on behalf of this bill. But the petition gained only 124 signatures; a majority of the House would have been required to discharge the bill from committee and bring it to the floor.⁹²

⁹⁰ The House bill number was H.R. 808, and the Senate number was S. 957. Sen. Rockefeller also introduced a bill containing only the health care and environmental titles of this legislation as S. 910.

⁹¹ Steel Manufacturers Association. *On Ending the Steel Crisis: Statement on a Program Needed and Principles Underlying Its Implementation* (Feb. 9, 2001).

⁹² See House Petition 107-5.

The Rockefeller Legacy Cost Bill. The liquidation of LTV early in 2002 terminated the health care plan that covered more than 80,000 employees, retirees and dependents. The bankruptcy of Bethlehem Steel threatens an even larger number of steel company health plan beneficiaries. The legacy cost impact for steel industry retirees was highlighted at a March 2002, hearing before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.⁹³ On April 17, 2002, Senator Jay Rockefeller, co-chair of the Senate Steel Caucus, introduced the Steel Industry Consolidation and Retiree Benefits Protection Act on behalf of himself, his co-chair (Senator Specter), the Majority Leader (Senator Daschle) and six other co-sponsors. As indicated by Sen. Rockefeller in his statement introducing the bill, part of the rationale was the belief that, “The American steel industry will not consolidate and will not survive without relief from their unique burden of substantial retiree health care costs.”⁹⁴

The Rockefeller bill would have added a new title to the 1974 Trade Act to establish a “Steel Industry Retiree Benefits Protection Program,” financed by a number of sources:

- tariff duties collected on steel mill products;
- retiree health care trust fund assets of qualified steel companies;
- a charge of \$5 per ton of steel shipped annually from the capacity of an acquired steel company (or otherwise “qualified” company) for 10 years;
- retiree premiums;
- “appropriated funds” for shortfalls, as authorized in the bill.

The bill was intended to cover retirees from all steel companies that were liquidated, in bankruptcy, or seeking acquisition as an alternative to bankruptcy and liquidation. In addition to such company-specific events, once a total of 200,000 retirees and beneficiaries were participating in the federal retiree benefits program, any other steel company could choose to transfer its retiree health care beneficiaries to the program (a process described as a “qualified election”).

Reported estimates of total costs of the program varied from \$4 billion to \$12 billion. The industry was not unanimous in support of the legislation. Some large integrated steel mill companies, notably U.S. Steel and Bethlehem Steel, as well as the USWA, were reportedly consulted in developing the bill and indicated their support. But the industry organizations AISI and SMA did not support the bill, and SMA president Thomas Danjczek was reportedly critical. “Let the market work, not the government,” he said. “I’m concerned that the essential interests of some of my members are being sacrificed by the drive to get subsidy relief by some domestic

⁹³ U.S. Senate HELP Committee. Hearing 107-345. *The Future of American Steel: Ensuring the Viability of the Industry and the Health Care and Retirement Security for Its Workers* (March 14, 2002).

⁹⁴ *Congressional Record* (April 17, 2002), p. S2842; the Rockefeller bill number was S. 2189.

producers.”⁹⁵ The Rockefeller bill was referred to the Finance Committee, of which Sen. Rockefeller is a member, but there was no further action.

Supporters of opening part of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) for oil and gas development also attempted to link to their legislation a steel legacy cost program similar to Sen. Rockefeller’s bill. Part of the royalties from any oil and gas production in ANWR would be hypothecated for the support of legacy cost benefits under this proposal. Sen. Rockefeller opposed this move, and it failed on the Senate floor.⁹⁶

House Steel Legacy Cost Relief Bills. Legislation similar to the Rockefeller bill was introduced in the House, but with some important differences. Representative Phil English and five co-sponsors introduced the Steel Industry Legacy Relief and Transition Act on April 24, 2002. This would have established a Steel Industry Legacy Relief Program within the Labor Department, managed by the Secretary of Labor. It would be partially funded by Section 201 tariff duties, any existing health care fund assets, participants’ premiums and a \$5 per ton charge on the capacity of assets transferred to another company. Retirees would become eligible for coverage through domestic steel company acquisitions of another company, industry “rationalization,” or participation in any company that was recently liquidated in order to include LTV and other retirees who had lost benefits. However, there was no “industry-wide election” provision as in the Rockefeller bill, and foreign-owned acquiring companies would not have been allowed to transfer legacy cost beneficiaries into the government-supported program.⁹⁷

The Steel Industry Legacy Relief Act was introduced by Representative John Dingell and 96 co-sponsors on May 2, 2002 (the number of co-sponsors had risen to 177 by October 2002). This bill was very similar to the Rockefeller bill. The major difference is that while the Dingell bill also established an “industry-wide” election process for transferring all steel retiree health care responsibilities to a “Steel Legacy Relief Trust Fund,” it would have given union representatives veto power over the transfer process. Thus, under this legislation, a company that was not in economic difficulties and whose retirees were therefore not eligible under the qualification provisions for transfer to the federal plan, would not be able to divest itself of legacy cost responsibilities unless each union representing 10% or more of its employees agreed.⁹⁸

On September 10, 2002, the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection of the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing on the Dingell bill. Witnesses from Bethlehem Steel and the USWA spoke in favor of the legislation, and a former president of the Steel Manufacturers Association spoke against it. A number of members of the Steel Caucus not on the committee attended

⁹⁵ *AMM*, April 19 and 22, 2002; *DER*, “Sens. Rockefeller, Specter Introduce Bill to Finance ‘Legacy Costs’ of Steel Industry” (April 19, 2002).

⁹⁶ *Washington Post*, April 19, 2002.

⁹⁷ The bill number was H.R. 4574. For commentary, see *AMM*, April 26, 2002.

⁹⁸ The bill number was H.R. 4646; this last provision was Section 112(d)(2)(B).

the hearing and joined members of the committee in supporting H.R. 4646. Conversely, a number of committee members expressed concern about the legislation, because the legislation would aid a class of U.S. workers and retirees who lose health care benefits, but not others.⁹⁹ No further action was taken on the bill.

The Outlook for Legislation on Steel

Congress gave President Bush the lead in resolving steel trade issues, after the President decided to launch a Section 201 trade case. President Bush's Section 201 trade remedies, announced on March 5, 2002, essentially kept the initiative in his hands. The measures taken by the President have engendered a strong international reaction and are being challenged under WTO rules.¹⁰⁰ But by taking a remedy action that went some way to meeting industry demands under Section 201, the President appears to have so far obviated separate actions in Congress that would have changed current U.S. trade law or perhaps contravened U.S. international obligations.

The impact of the Section 201 safeguard tariffs on domestic industry remains a hotly debated subject. Much of the U.S. steel industry remains financially troubled. However, the closure of some domestic capacity because of financial distress, a substantial rise in prices in early 2002, the Section 201 trade relief and a recent fall in the dollar's exchange rate against the currencies of some major competing producers all helped provide a better year for the industry as a whole in 2002. Conversely, some industries that use steel complain that higher domestic steel prices, resulting at least partly from trade remedy action, have had adverse competitive consequences in their case. This could delay or derail the consuming industries' recovery from the recent economic recession, or even drive some of them offshore. Thus, some companies and Members of Congress are supporting H.Con.Res. 23, which would assure at least a review of the situation of steel consumers in the ITC midterm report on the steel safeguard tariffs.

Since President Bush acted under Section 201, Congress has essentially refrained from short-term industry relief measures, with the exception of limited health care relief for retirees under the 2002 Trade Act. While a number of broader legacy cost relief bills have been proposed, the fact is that the unions, the integrated steel mill companies and the minimills have so far not united behind any one plan to deal with the legacy cost issue – unlike the situation with Section 201, when all parts of the industry requested presidential action. Nor has legislative action on legacy cost relief been supported by the Bush Administration.

⁹⁹ See *DER*, "Government Funding for Steel Retiree 'Legacy Costs' Debated by Lawmakers" (September 11, 2002).

¹⁰⁰ On these international challenges, see Jeanne Grimmett and Stephen Cooney, CRS Report RL31474, *Steel and the WTO: Summary and Timelines of Pending Proceedings Involving the United States*.

For Additional Reading

CRS Report RL31748, *The American Steel Industry: A Changing Profile*, by Stephen Cooney.

CRS Report RL31474, *Steel and the WTO: Summary and Timelines of Pending Proceedings Involving the United States*, by Jeanne J. Grimmett and Stephen Cooney.