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American-Made Products Boosting Alabama Jobs

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LOCALS WANT MORE “MADE IN THE USA” POLICIES FROM WASHINGTON

As political candidates talk economic policy ahead of the March 1 Super Tuesday primaries, Alabamians are focused on “Made in the USA” policy solutions as keys to job creation and economic growth.

A [collection of new interviews \(https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfP4PjeZgvgl2WhxPOMa\)](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfP4PjeZgvgl2WhxPOMa) with factory workers, business executives and community leaders in Anniston and Birmingham, Alabama, showcases how policy solutions such as Buy America and fair trade with China create good-paying, middle class manufacturing jobs and benefit the entire community.

 1/20 When They're Gone...



“You know, it’s simple. It’s jobs,” [said factory worker Bill Bush](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BB2LiJSRi_U&index=3&list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfP4PjeZgvgl2WhxPOMa)

[\(https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BB2LiJSRi_U&index=3&list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfP4PjeZgvgl2WhxPOMa)

[v=BB2LiJSRi_U&index=3&list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfP4PjeZgvgl2WhxPOMa\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BB2LiJSRi_U&index=3&list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfP4PjeZgvgl2WhxPOMa), who works at Tyler Union in Anniston. “When people have very good, well-paying jobs it helps the community from the top down.”

More than 5.1 million U.S. manufacturing jobs have vanished since 2000, with more than 98,000 of those in Alabama since 2001. In 2015, manufacturing accounted for just 30,000 of the 2.7 million jobs created nationwide.

But manufacturing remains the backbone of the economy in central Alabama. These middle-class jobs provide workers with a good way of life and strengthen local communities.

“Birmingham’s DNA is in manufacturing,” said Rick Davis

([https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPxLij4giLA&index=16&list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfP4PjeZgvg12WhxPOMa)

[v=jPxLij4giLA&index=16&list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfP4PjeZgvg12WhxPOMa](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPxLij4giLA&index=16&list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfP4PjeZgvg12WhxPOMa)), senior vice president for Economic Development at the Birmingham Business Alliance. “We were created to build and make steel and iron ore and, then, cast iron. That’s what we’ve done for 140 years. We still do that today.”

Added Davis: “Those are absolutely some of the best jobs that you could ever create in any community.”

The focus on jobs and pro-manufacturing policy solutions

([http://www.americanmanufacturing.org/blog/entry/trade-talking-candidates-making-](http://www.americanmanufacturing.org/blog/entry/trade-talking-candidates-making-headlines)

[headlines](http://www.americanmanufacturing.org/blog/entry/trade-talking-candidates-making-headlines)) in the 2016 election cycle comes as Alabama benefits from the passage of new Buy America laws for water projects that direct U.S. tax dollars to U.S.-made products rather than sourcing iron and steel from overseas. As communities rely on Alabama’s steel mills and iron foundries to build and repair drinking water and sewer systems, the reinvestment of tax dollars back into local communities is helping to create and retain U.S. factory jobs and supporting the broader economy.

“The more you buy, the more we make. You know, the more money we make and the hours we get, putting money back. Like I said, putting money back into the community,” said

Courtney Thompson ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sdxVEwQ9eE&list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfP4PjeZgvg12WhxPOMa&index=5)

[v=_sdxVEwQ9eE&list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfP4PjeZgvg12WhxPOMa&index=5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sdxVEwQ9eE&list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfP4PjeZgvg12WhxPOMa&index=5)), an iron foundry worker at Tyler Union in Anniston.

Prior to the passage of Buy America laws for water infrastructure spending, community water system upgrades financed by American taxpayers were buying iron and steel products from China, India, and other foreign countries. This angered key lawmakers who stepped forward with pro-manufacturing solutions.

“The Buy American provisions that Congress has included in legislation means manufacturing jobs stay here in America,” said Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-Ala.), sponsor of the annual Buy American provision within the Appropriations process.

Rep. Martha Roby (R-Ala.) explained: “The infrastructure of our nation is used by our citizens, paid for by our citizens’ tax dollars, and should be built by our citizens. I’m proud to be a supporter of Buy America provisions that support a robust manufacturing industry in Alabama.”

Rep. Pete Visclosky (D-Ind.), who helped champion the new Buy America law, agrees. “Our country has an obligation to ensure that hard-earned American taxpayer dollars are only used on products that put Americans to work,” he said. “It is in our economic and national security interests to continue to make things in our great nation.”

Local business interests were quick to back the new law. “Buy America just makes sense,” said Don Hopper (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1qUDRZG-w0&index=9&list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfp4PjeZgvg12WhxPOMa>), executive director of the Calhoun County Economic Development Council. “Buy America just continues to grow that industry or those industries and just continues to provide more for our economy. Like I said, [it] provides jobs for people to provide for their families.”

Menzo Parker, an employee at M & H Valve, remembers working fewer hours and worrying about layoffs prior to the Buy America law for water system construction projects. “I remember about, I don’t know, I’d say six, seven, eight years ago, things got pretty bad. We had cut our hours down to 32 hours a week.”

Today, Parker is working a full work week and reinvesting back into the community. “The money that we make here, we are able to put it back into the community. We put it back into the community by going to the stores, going to the grocery stores, going to the movies, doing a whole lot of things. Plus our taxes too,” he said.

Janice Williams, a member of the United Steelworkers Local 2140 in Bessemer, Ala., says smart Buy America policies help support good-paying jobs like hers, which has enabled her to become a homeowner. But the entire community benefits from the plant.

“Most of the people at this place come from the community, and that’s what keeps the community above the poverty level,” she said. “Ninety percent of the people that work at this plant live in this area, and it’s a sense of pride because they know as long as they’ve got a job, they’re coming to work, the community is always striving, no one is out on the streets, bringing the property value down. Everything is up. So it’s very important.”

Thomas Coleman, the owner of Dad's Bar-B-Que in Anniston, explained that small businesses like his rely on the factory workers (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uN51rB-ww7M&list=PL0ETr3PZq7dFadfp4PjeZgvg12WhxPOMa&index=20>) in his town. "The more you Buy America, the more these people, our customers, are working, and they can come eat with us. It's really important," he said.

If Buy America laws remain in place, the future will be brighter for towns like Anniston and Birmingham. Yet, that relies on a continued commitment by Congress and the next president to "Made in the USA" policies. Several key battles lie ahead in 2016 as lawmakers seek to make these Buy America laws permanent and fight off opposition by importers and companies who have moved their products and supply chains abroad.

"As the Appropriations Committee begins its work for Fiscal Year 2017, I will continue to see that the Committee aggressively protects and implements Buy America requirements," said Visclosky, who continues to work with Alabama leadership and others to promote American-made policies.

"It's not enough for members of Congress to talk about manufacturing being the means to support the middle class through good jobs," said Aderholt. "We need to practice what we preach in ensuring American goods are used for federally funded projects."

MORE: Manufacturing is a core component of the U.S. economy and central to the U.S. continuing its leadership role in the global economy:

- Manufacturing contributes \$5.9 trillion annually to the U.S. economy.*
- Manufacturing jobs make up 13.1% of total employment in Alabama (249,100 jobs) and about 8.8% of total employment nationally.*
- Manufacturing makes up 17.8% of Alabama's gross state product.*
- Voters see U.S. policies, like outsourcing, as the #1 obstacle to manufacturing job creation.**
- 95% of Americans have a favorable view of American-made products.**
- 4 out of 5 voters favor spending state and federal tax dollars on American-made goods whenever possible.**
- 60% of voters say the U.S. needs to "get tough" with countries like China in order to halt unfair trade practices, including currency manipulation.**
- For every manufacturing job, up to seven jobs are created in other sectors.***

*Source: January 2015 EPI Study (<http://www.epi.org/publication/the-manufacturing-footprint-and-the-importance-of-u-s-manufacturing-jobs/>)

***Source: January 2014 Mellman Group and North Star Opinion Research survey*
(<http://www.americanmanufacturing.org/2014poll/>)

****Source: The Magic Job Multiplier of Manufacturing, November, 2013*
(http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jerry-jasinowski/jobs-multiplier_b_4002113.html)