

Hoffman, Beiser send extension of unemployment benefits for laid-off steel workers to Governor

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SPRINGFIELD – Legislation sponsored by state Rep. Jay Hoffman, D-Swansea, and state Rep. Dan Beiser, D-Alton, extending unemployment benefits for laid off workers at the U.S. Steel plant in Granite City passed the House and Senate today with overwhelming bipartisan support.

“U.S. Steel workers and their families continue to suffer the disastrous effects of illegal trade practices in the steel market,” Hoffman said. “I will continue fighting for any relief that can be provided until the mills are up and running again.”

Hoffman and Beiser are pushing Senate Bill 1941 as a response to the idling of the U.S. Steel mill in Granite City which has resulted in the layoffs of approximately 2,300 workers. The mill was idled in December 2015 due to an influx of cheap steel illegally imported into U.S. markets which has reduced the demand for domestic steel.

Hoffman and Beiser negotiated an agreement between labor groups, business groups and the Illinois Department of Employment Security that will extend the unemployment benefits laid-off workers receive from 26 weeks to 52 weeks during a one-year period. The amount of the extended weekly benefit would be the same as the weekly benefit of the regular unemployment period, plus dependents' allowances. The bill passed both the House and the Senate and will now be sent to the governor for approval.

“Extending these benefits is an attempt to provide relief for local families, but it is not a solution to the problem,” Beiser said. “I will continue doing everything I can to support the steel workers in our community until the federal government takes action to stop the illegal dumping of foreign steel.”