**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**How to File a TAA Petition Online**

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GARY GONZALEZ: I want to thank everyone for joining us for today's "How to File a TAA Petition Online" presented by the Office of Trade Adjustment Assistance. Again, type into that welcome chat who you are and where you're from and, again, how many are joining you, if you do happen to be in a group today.

And without any further ado, I'm going to turn things over to Bunmi Sanusi. Bunmi is a program analyst with the Office of Trade Adjustment Assistance with the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, DC. Bunmi?

BUNMI SANUSI: Hello. I am Bunmi Sanusi, and I will be walking you through the wonderful world of TAA petition filing, specifically online filing, which is by far the best way to submit a TAA petition. Every day in OTAA I and my team are responsible for collecting petitions, reviewing them to accept if they are valid, and transcribing the data that comes from the petition in our case management system and working with the investigative unit to get the case assigned to investigators.

I am joined by Jacque Mendelsohn who will represent with me today. Jacque, would you please summarize what you do as a certifying officer?

JACQUELYN MENDELSOHN: Hi. I'm one of the certifying officers, and I'm a seasoned investigative staff member here at TAA. I'm responsible for reviewing group eligibility determination with an order to see that all criteria that governs TAA statutory and regulatory rules are met. Thank you.

MS. SANUSI: Thank you. Today's objectives.

First, we will review the four parts of the petition, including important details that can make a big difference in speeding up an investigation process.

Second, we'll do a summary of the advantages of filing online and the disadvantages of other petition submission types.

Third, we will work through the online application by filing a petition online and point out several key features of the online application, and also we'll be looking at what happens to an online petition once it is filed.

Last, I will share additional resources for petition filing assistance and recapping the highlights of today's presentation.

One, the petition overview. First, let's take a look at the information collected in the petition. The four sections of the petition are, one, petitioner information, two, information related to the company that employs the petitioner worker group, three, space to provide reasons the petitioner worker groups layoff impacted by foreign trade, four, the signature and the date of the petition.

Section one, petitioner information. Petitioner type refers to the different types of individuals that file a petition. A petition may be filed by free workers, a company official, a state or local workforce representative, or a union official. As you see on the online application, this is the first question that is asked because it actually helps to tailor the remainder of the information requested.

Providing an accurate name, address, phone number, and/or e-mail of the petition is very important. In some cases petitioner can be very useful sources of information. In fact, if a state or local workforce person is filing on behalf of a worker, we highly recommend including the worker as a petitioner so that the OTAA investigator may follow up for additional worker group information.

MS. MENDELSOHN: And I just wanted to emphasize that point. It's very important for the investigator to get the worker's name, if possible. So if the state is providing technical assistance to workers, try to get as much information as possible. It's very good for us to have the worker name to identify the group properly.

MS. SANUSI: The date of the worker's separation is very important as well. It is required and must be no more than one year before the date of the petition in order to be valid. Describing the worker group is very important. Jacque, would you like to say some more about this?

MS. MENDELSOHN: Sure. Oftentimes we receive petitions that are filed for companies like Verizon, these huge companies with thousands of workers in the United States. So it's very important for us to get an accurate description of the worker group. Generally, we're dealing with general counsel. So they're not familiar with necessarily these workers that have filed for benefits.

And I also wanted to mention that oftentimes we hear that workers are in fear of retribution and that's not something that states should worry about because we are dealing with general counsel and usually it's not their direct manager. Thank you.

MS. SANUSI: Thank you, Jacque. Section two, workers' firm. Section two of the petition asks for critical information about worker groups, company name and contact information, the number of worker in the affected worker group, a description of what the workers make, if it is a product, or provide, if it is a service, whether the firm that employs the worker is shutting down completely. Is there anything you'd like to add in regards to this section, Jacque?

MS. MENDELSOHN: Yes. Definitely. So we want to make sure that a description of the service or the production is indicated on the petition document because we need that information for the petition to be valid. Thank you.

MS. SANUSI: Section three, trade effects on separation. Section three provides space for the petitioner to describe why worker group layoffs are due to foreign trade. This must be completed and specific. Jacque, would you please share more about what to focus on here?

MS. MENDELSOHN: So when we need – well, it's important for the investigative staff to get an understanding of what's causing the layoffs or the separations at the firm. We're looking for information like imports or a shift in production abroad. So if you could provide that information, if you have it, it's helpful to us. Thank you.

MS. SANUSI: Additional documents, Jacque, is it possible to have too much information?

MS. MENDELSOHN: No. If you've got it, give it to us. It will really help us on the investigative side process the petition quickly and the investigation smoothly.

MS. SANUSI: Last in this section and very important is to provide the name and contact information of at least one company official. We invalidate a lot of petitions because this information is missing. Can you tell us, Jacque, more about why this information also is important?

MS. MENDELSOHN: It's very important for the investigative staff to have a company contact, a point of contact. If you have e-mail, telephone numbers, that's really helpful to us, and it gets the investigation going much more quickly. So again, the more information you have and the more information you share with us, the more quickly we can process the petition. Thank you.

MS. SANUSI: Section four, affirmation of information. Finally, there is the petition signature and date. On the online petition this is simply a checkbox. This information is definitely necessary to be valid.

Two, filing TAA petition online versus other methods. So let's look at all the advantages of filing online and some of the pitfalls of other methods of submitting.

Filing online advantages. Faster transmission to DOL. It won't get lost or misplaced. It won't get jammed on the fax machine or lost in the mail. The petition will automatically be transmitted to the applicable state. It's a one (stop ?), not two. As soon the petition is submitted electronically, the petitioner will receive a receipt via e-mail acknowledging that the petition was successfully received in the designated DOL petitioner inbox.

Legible in print signature. You cannot submit a petition online without all the required information; and as you're about to see, the online petition has help buttons throughout the application that can be accessed to provide helpful tips and (end ?) for completing the different sections of the petition.

Not filing online disadvantages. The biggest problem we have with faxed and mailed petitions is when they are hand-written, even if it legible, the fax transmission may not be legible in the case of handwriting. Additionally, there may be issues with the ink in the printer, even if it is typed. Therefore, we encourage online filing so that these types of problems with legibility and ink transfer are not an issue.

MS. MENDELSOHN: Yeah. It would – it's very important for us. It's very difficult to read handwritten petitions. So if you can file online, please do so because it's a benefit to our office. Thank you.

MS. SANUSI: You cannot successfully submit an online application without necessary dates and signature. When you submit online, completion of these elements are guaranteed. If you submit via fax or mail, there is a possibility that you will forget to include a page. It is not uncommon for the signature page to be missing. Again, this is not an issue with the online submission.

Sometimes, albeit rarely, the network needed to operate the faxes may be down temporarily, which can delay transmission; or there are paper jams, which again delays transmissions.

Three, online filing demo. Now, let's file a petition online. The TAA website is www.doleta.gov/tradeact. Once you are on the homepage of the TAA website, you can access the online TAA petition through a couple of different places on the page. Either choose the dropdown available by scrolling over file a petition in the horizontal menu near the top of the page or use the left-side menu and choose the option file online under file a petition.

First page. The first page of the online application instructs the user that this is a government application and there are penalties for misuse. Note that on several pages there is a warning in that font that the back button will not work within the application. There is no ability to return to a previous page once inside the application. Click continue.

This is the first instruction page. This page contains a summary of what the TAA program is, additional ways through which a petition can be filed via fax or U.S. mail. There is a reminder that only workers who are laid off one year or less from the date of the petition are eligible for a TAA petition. There are links to reach out to state and local contact for help if filing a petition, how to get help from the ETA national office in filing a petition. Click continue.

The second instruction page, this page notes the key fields that are needed before filing. One defense regarding the online TAA petition is that you cannot save information halfway. The system does not archive incomplete petitions, and the system will time out after 15 minutes of inactivity. This page provides the opportunity to review key information that is required for a completed petition and provides a link for you to view, print out a full two-page petition so that you can see all of the information that the petition is designed to collect. Next, we click continue.

Section one, petitioner information. This is section one, petitioner information, and note that when you scroll over the question mark that exists next to each section, you can access helpful information that can assist in clarifying the necessary information. In many cases these help sections also provide information on why the requested information is important.

So let's see what happens when we try to skip a required field. In this case the worker separation date is required. Remember the separation date cannot be more than one year before the petition date. Note that if you miss a required field, you will receive an error screen like most applications with this feature. You must complete the required field in order to proceed to the next screen of the application.

Section two, workers' firm. This section is critical and helps in the investigation move effectively. The name of the company you are filing, street address, telephone, and specify if all workers are at the same location. Describe the article produced by the firm. Again, this is essential and should be filled out as fully as possible. If you don't have enough space, you can have an attachment.

Groups to the extent possible. It is important to name the specific group and activity. For example, if the company makes widgets but their claims department is being shifted, tell us both what the company does and any details about the group itself that may be helpful to the investigator.

Section three, trade effects. Section three has three components. The first and the third are required, and the one in the middle is optional. First, it is a requirement for the petition to describe all the information known about the company that will help an investigation lead to a certification. This is a section that asks the petitioner to explain why he or she believes that the worker group layoff is due to trade effects. Keep in mind to be as specific as possible.

Second is the opportunity to attach up to three documents. This feature is designed to provide the petitioner with the opportunity to include any and all additional materials that may help the investigation. The last in this section are all the important company contacts. One is required. Two are better. One of the biggest delays in processing petitions is not knowing who to contact at the company. Be sure the contact information is correct. The person will be familiar with the information we need. Example, human resources, legal are terrific places to start.

And here I want to emphasize the importance of e-mail for company contacts. They are very important. Giving us a good company contact e-mail address helps us speed the investigation process.

Review and affirmation of information. Once sections one through three are complete, you will have the opportunity to review and edit what you have provided. If you choose to edit, there are links for each section.

Section four, last, there is the signature page, which on the online petition equates with checking the box on the attestation that what has been provided is accurate and that the petition or petitioners represented in this online form are also accurate. There is ability to forward petitions to any valid e-mail address and submit your petition.

After the petition is submitted, again, all electronic petitions include an immediate confirmation of successful electronic transmission via e-mail. And as we all the petitions, we process and assign the petition within 24 hours.

Best practices. Now, let's review what we know to be the best tips on effective TAA petition filing and identify some additional resources that can help guide your petition filing. Let's review the strategies we discussed today for the fastest possible TAA petition processing. File online. Complete contact information. Include good phone numbers and valid e-mail addressed. Be sure to provide as much information about why the worker group may be trade affected. Attach all necessary documents that may help with investigations, and remember provide a solid contact with as much intel as possible with the investigation.

TAA petition resources. Additional resources for filing TAA petitions may be found on our website and are also provided on this slide.

Any questions? Now, it is time to field any relevant questions about how to complete a petition that would help speed a group eligibility investigation. Please note that all questions will be archived. Those that are not answered within the scope of this webinar may be answered subsequently in a transmission that follows the webinar along with the transcript and access to a recording of this webinar.

SUSAN WORDEN: OK. My name is Susan Worden. I am the supervisor in charge of the Performance Management Information Assistance Unit. I'm going to be fielding questions for our subject matter expert on investigations, Jacque or Bunmi, as the case may be.

First question is, in a workers' – "In the workers' firm information, there are two spaces for workers' information, one for the main location and one for a location where workers are impacted. If workers are impacted at both the main facility and another location, should they file in the same petition or on separate petitions?"

MS. MENDELSOHN: Now, both locations can be included. It's important to kind of tell us what you're doing, but we do accept both locations in that information, released workers. So anything that you have you can include it. You can also provide it in the narrative under the trade impact, if you want to further illustrate who you're filing for.

MS. WORDEN: OK. Second question, "Do you know if the number of characters permitted when filing online can be extended in any future application updates? I find that there's rarely enough room to provide details about the group being impacted when describing the worker group and in section three as well."

And I can speak on behalf of that, the person who's in charge of the updates, that in fact we are in the process of trying to expand those fields so that you can fill it out completely within the scope of the online application. Investigative colleagues have also notified me that another method you can follow, if filing online, is to send any additional worker group information either by attachments in the attachment section or to follow on directly with the investigator.

All petition filers will receive notification of the investigative contact shortly after the petition filing, and that would be an opportunity in the interim to provide additional information. But the short answer is, yes. We are working to expand those fields.

Next question, "You mentioned that if the state files, that we should still list the affected worker as a second petitioner so you have that information. If we do that, then wouldn't they be required to sign as well?"

If you are not talking about the online filing application, they would be required to sign. However, for the online filing, they would be able to simply check a box on behalf of all the petitioners who are filing on the petition.

"Could a field to the employer's SEIN or EAN be added to section two?"

So that is something that we could take into consideration. One of the things to understand with regard to any form that collects information from the public is it must be cleared through the Office of Management and Budget and therefore would require a revision to the form and is not just a quick update. But we will take the request into account.

"How many certifying officers are dedicated to trade petitions?"

MS. MENDELSOHN: Currently we have four certifying officers either dedicated to trade petitions, and we're also dedicated to providing workers with benefits and supporting our states. So reach out to the investigative staff or your certifying officer if you need assistance.

MS. WORDEN: And next question is, "Is there a save feature that would allow you to return to the unfinished application at a later time?"

This is not a feature of the online petition application, and unlike the other request for modifications to expand fields, this would be a significant revision. So unfortunately, this is not something that we can offer in the short-term, but it's certainly something that we would like to be able to do. It's one of the reasons why we do encourage you to make sure you have all of your information before you file online.

Next question, "Do attachments for the online petition filing process have to be in a certain format or size limit? I've been unable to include an attachment in the past."

We did a significant amount of troubleshooting in response to states who were saying that they were struggling to file an attachment. I would encourage you to follow up directly with us if you are encountering any issues with regard to attaching anything to the document so that we may provide direct technical assistance. We are looking to make this process as easy and accessible as possible.

Next question, "Is the company notified of the petition decision even if they are not included in the original petition submission?"

All company officials do receive a copy of the eligibility determination following the issuance of the determination.

"How do we file an amended petition?"

I'm assuming the request – it's a request for how you file an amendment, a request to amend a petition, and we do have a dedicated e-mail for those types of requests. It's at taa.amendments@dol.gov, and we will provide that a second time in the follow-up information that will come along with the recorded link to this webinar, as that is a really critical resource that everyone should be aware of as the vehicle through which to request an amendment.

MS. MENDELSOHN: And I just wanted to mention that's the best way to file an amendment request. Oftentimes, if you speak with the investigative staff and you tell them, hey, I want to file an amendment, sometimes it can get lost. So definitely you want to utilize that e-mail address for filing amendments.

MS. WORDEN: Oh, and last question, "Do the petitioners receive confirmation of an amendment request?"

Generally speaking, there is communication with the individual who requested an amendment with regard to getting clarification on the amendment being requested.

MS. MENDELSOHN: Generally, when we receive a petition, all of the petitioners are contacted by our investigative staff, and the company officials are contacted as well. So we would hope that that information would be transmitted.

MS. WORDEN: "Who do we contact, if we haven't received confirmation of an amendment?"

You would contact the TAA hotline, which is available through the TAA website, and you could specifically request to contact the certifying officer who had signed the original determination.

"Who should be contacted if receipt of a certification is received by the website has not been updated?"

We do have specific contacts with that, and probably the best way to communicate that is via the follow up that we will provide alongside the recording of this live webinar.

MS. MENDELSOHN: And the investigator handling your case, their e-mail address will be provided. So you can certainly reach out to them.

MS. WORDEN: OK. With that we're going to move on.

MS. SANUSI: And here are the contacts that relate to today's presentation for further questions. You have the e-mail of Susan Worden, Bunmi Sanusi, and Jacquelyn Mendelsohn. For further questions you can e-mail us, and we will respond to you in a matter of time.

MS. MENDELSOHN: But again, I would encourage you, before you file any immediate questions, there will be some follow up. Some of the questions that may have been asked today will be followed up on offline as a part of the follow up along with the recorded webinar that will be transmitted to everyone who registered for this webinar.

MS. WORDEN: And with that I would say thank you very much on behalf of OTAA. We look forward to hearing from you, and we thank you for partnering with us to serve the TAA workers in our country. Thank you.

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