

RON BLOOM TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH HIS FAMILY WHILE OBAMA PUSHES TRADE DEALS

So Ron Bloom, Obama's manufacturing czar and a key figure in the auto bailout, has announced he is leaving the White House to spend more time with his family.

Today, the White House announced Ron Bloom will be stepping down from his position as the Assistant to the President for Manufacturing Policy at the end of August.

[snip]

Bloom will be returning to his long-time residence of Pittsburgh, PA to take the opportunity to spend more time with his family.

The press coverage of the timing of Bloom's departure has focused more on what hasn't happened yet than on what has. It emphasizes that Bloom is leaving before the government sheds the last of its stake in GM. And also notes that Congress probably won't ever approve actually doing anything to support US manufacturing (in spite of the near unanimity it should).

Bloom won't stay on to see the government completely exit the auto industry. The government still owns a 26 percent stake in General Motors Co. and 74 percent of Detroit-based Ally Financial. But it has completely exited Chrysler Group LLC, booking a \$1.3 billion loss.

Bloom was initially tapped with working to boost the struggling manufacturing sector in September 2009 and took on the

role full-time this year. He also oversaw the successful initial public stock offering of GM.

But efforts to further turn around manufacturing – including funding government programs – are likely to go nowhere since Congress is unlikely to approve any new money. Sperling said the Obama administration would still push Congress to do more to boost manufacturing.

But that misses one key aspect of the timing of Bloom's departure.

Bloom's announcement comes just days after reports that Congress will vote on Obama's trade deals with South Korea, Panama, and Colombia and the Trade Adjustment Assistance. But reports on the deal make it clear that 1) Democrats failed to get a commitment to link the trade deal votes with the vote on TAA, and 2) John Boehner still has not committed to what order he'll advance the bills.

The White House and Democrats are continuing to negotiate the terms of a vote with Speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio), who has said he plans to bring up for a vote the trade deals and the assistance program, known as TAA.

"While some sequencing details remain to be worked out, the speaker has now clearly committed to floor consideration of TAA, along with the trade agreements," said Carol Guthrie, a spokeswoman for Kirk. "The Senate leaders' agreement on a way forward is an important step on the path to submission of the pending agreements."

[snip]

Democrats and the White House have wanted legislation renewing the trade assistance program to be voted on along

with the three trade deals. Republicans have insisted that they be considered separately.

In a joint statement released late Tuesday, Reid and McConnell said separate votes would be held, with the vote on the trade assistance program coming first.

In other words, last week's announcement opened the possibility that the trade deals might pass without the TAA that helps manufacturing workers transition into new jobs. And if TAA doesn't get passed, that's a huge chunk of investment in job creation that will be sacrificed to the TeaParty Congress.

And at precisely the same time as this possibility became more likely, the language Obama used to describe the trade deals got a whole lot more Orwellian, suggesting that the trade deals themselves—as opposed to the TAA—would help workers displaced by the trade deals.

Now, I don't know whether there's a connected between these trade developments and Bloom's departure or not.

But I do know that Bloom won't be around in September when this deal—with or without TAA—will be pushed through Congress.