

CHRONICLE OF A WEAK FEDERAL LAW

1973 — U.S. Sen. Walter Mondale, a Minnesota Democrat, introduces the first bill requiring employers to give workers notice of plant closings and major layoffs.

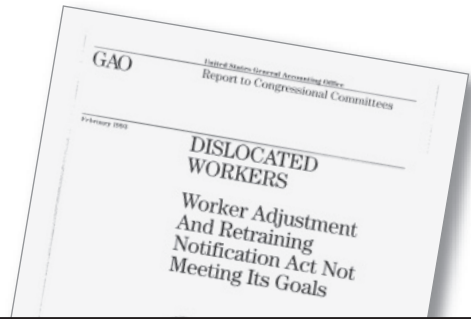


April, 1988 — Congress approves an international trade bill that includes provisions requiring many employers to provide 60-days notice of plant closings and mass layoffs.



June, 1988 — U.S. Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, an Ohio Democrat, introduces the "plant-closing" provisions as a separate bill.

February, 1993 — Government Accountability Office releases a report, "Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act Not Meeting Its Goals." The report finds a lack of enforcement and that too few employers are required to follow the law.



1973

1985

1988

1993

1994

2003

Jan.

Feb.

Mar.

April

May

June

July

Aug.

Sept.

Oct.

Nov.

Dec.

November, 1985 — Congress holds its first vote on the "plant-closing bill," which would require at least 90-days notice. By a 208-203 vote, the House of Representatives defeats the measure.

May, 1988 — President Ronald Reagan vetoes the trade bill and cites the sections requiring plant-closing notices as one of his reasons. The House overrides Mr. Reagan's veto, but the Senate does not.



July 6, 1988 — The Senate votes 72-23 to approve the bill, and the House follows a week later, also by a veto-proof margin.

Aug. 4, 1988 — The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act — known as the WARN Act — becomes law without President Reagan's signature. President Reagan, in a statement, says the WARN Act is "counterproductive," but he allowed it to become law to gain support in Congress for a trade bill he was pushing.

March, 1994 — Senator Metzenbaum proposes amendments to the WARN Act to provide additional notice, enforcement by the U.S. Department of Labor, and require WARN Act compliance by more employers. The amendments never become law.

September, 2003 — Government Accountability Office releases a report finding that only one-quarter of the 8,350 plant closings in 2001 were subject to the WARN Act.