

Snowe and Levin Request Additional Funding for Manufacturing Extension Partnership

WASHINGTON D.C. – U.S. Senators Olympia J. Snowe (R-Maine), Co-Chair of the Senate Task Force on Manufacturing and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Small Business, and Carl Levin (D-Mich.), Senate Task Force on Manufacturing Member and Chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, today requested that the Senate Appropriations Committee provide the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) with \$20 million in additional funds to help small- and medium-sized American manufacturers modernize to compete in the demanding global marketplace. Senators Snowe and Levin were joined by sixteen Senators in their call for the additional funds to be included in the forthcoming Fiscal Year 2008 supplemental appropriations bill.

“At a time when our economy is struggling, it is vital that Congress assist manufacturers to enhance our nation’s defense supply chain, create additional jobs, and remain globally competitive,” said Senator Snowe. “As one of the most successful Federal/state partnerships in government, the MEP provides critical services to our nation’s manufacturers, enabling them to improve productivity and better compete in the global marketplace.”

“American companies can compete with any company in the world if we have a level playing field, but the problem is that our manufacturing companies often are not competing against foreign companies, but foreign governments,” Levin said. “We need to find ways to support our manufacturers, and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership is one of the few federal programs that provide tangible assistance to American manufacturers across the nation to help them retain and create jobs. MEP projects helped to create or retain more than 52,000 manufacturing jobs in 2007 alone,” said Senator Levin.

The \$20 million funding request would be provided to MEP centers nationwide to offset fees that manufacturers pay for MEP services. The offsets would be limited to manufacturers with fewer than 100 employees, often the first to feel the impact of an economic downturn, and would establish quicker and greater infrastructure improvements among small manufacturers. The result of this investment would include innovation, job creation and retention, sales increases, and cost savings.

The MEP is a nationwide network of not-for-profit centers with more than locations nationwide. Their sole purpose is to provide small- and medium-sized manufacturers with assistance in implementing the most advanced manufacturing technologies and processes to succeed in the global economy. The centers, serving all 50 states and Puerto Rico, are linked together through the Department of Commerce’s National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

Following is the text of the Appropriations request:

April 15, 2008

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski, Chairwoman
The Honorable Richard C. Shelby, Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

We are writing to respectfully request that \$20 million for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) be included in the upcoming FY08 supplemental appropriations bill.

As you know, MEP assists America's small manufacturers and helps boost productivity, sales and investment in modernization and employment. MEP is the only nationwide program created specifically to help the 341,000 small manufacturers who serve as the backbone of our nation's economy. MEP Centers assist their customers to become innovative high-tech global competitors, to increase domestic manufacturers' contributions to national defense and homeland security, and to keep the economy strong with thousands of high-wage manufacturing jobs.

As the Committee considers ways to stimulate our economic recovery through investments in infrastructure, we urge you to consider investing in manufacturing infrastructure through MEP.

The \$20 million requested would provide immediate assistance to manufacturers to maintain and improve their competitiveness. The funding would be provided through MEP to its Centers around the country to offset fees for services manufacturers pay for MEP services. These offsets would be limited to manufacturers with less than 100 employees, who are the first to feel the impact of the economic downturn. These offsets would help establish quicker and greater infrastructure improvements among these small manufacturers and allow them to keep cash in their pockets that they would otherwise pay to MEP centers. The results of this investment would include job creation and retention, sales increases and cost savings. In order to meet the goal of a short-term stimulus and to provide immediate assistance to manufacturers, the supplemental funds being requested could be required to be expended within 45 days.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical request that will help American manufacturing and the economy as a whole.

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