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## **House Appropriations Subcommittee Marks MEP at \$92 Million**

Washington, D.C. (June 14, 2006) – Today, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice, and Commerce, the Judiciary and Related Agencies marked-up its fiscal year 2007 appropriations bill which included \$92 million for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program. This is a decrease from the \$106 million appropriated by Congress in the 2006 fiscal year. Although an increase from the President's request of \$46.3 million, if enacted, the House level would mean a loss of service to America's small manufacturers. The NIST MEP program, which was authorized in 1988 to improve the competitiveness of small and mid-sized manufacturers, is the only government program specifically targeted for manufacturers. This mark comes as a surprise as a majority of House of Representatives (226) signed a letter of support for the MEP program back in March, which urged the Subcommittee to provide \$106 million in full funding to the program in its fiscal year 2007 bill.

The Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is a network of 59 centers, with over 350 locations across the country and in Puerto Rico, providing technical assistance and business support services to America's small manufacturers. The public/private program, which served 16,448 in fiscal year 2005, achieves more than a ten to one return on federal investment. An independent survey of 4,644 clients served by the program in federal fiscal year 2004 states that MEP clients report over \$721 million in cost savings directly attributed to the program's assistance as well as creating or retaining over \$4.532 billion in sales. The program also helped manufacturers create or retain 43,624 jobs and increase investment of \$941 million back into the economy.

The American Small Manufacturers Coalition (ASMC), the trade association of NIST MEP Centers, have advocated for Congressional support of the program through its members and manufacturing clients. These efforts have resulted in overwhelming bi-partisan support for the program. Mike Coast, Chairman of the ASMC and President of the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center, the Michigan NIST MEP affiliate, states "The House mark, although a significant increase over the President's request, is still concerning to American small manufacturers. Unfortunately, it shows that a disparity still exists between base science and technology research to its impact on the global economy through American industry. It is ASMC's hope that this disparity can be reconciled by the overwhelming Congressional, State and Industry support of the MEP program and the proven success in which it continues to achieve."