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Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Marks MEP at \$106 Million

Washington, D.C. (July 11, 2006) – Today, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, the Judiciary and Related Agencies provided in its fiscal year 2007 bill \$106 million for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program. This mark reflects the March request of 63 Senators to provide level funding for MEP.

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. It 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 manufacturers in fiscal year 2005, achieves more than a ten-to-one return on federal investment. In an independent survey, MEP clients report over \$721 million in cost savings directly attributed to the program's assistance, as well as the creation or retainment of more than \$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, has 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 "MEP Centers greatly appreciate the commitment of the Senate to fund this program at the \$106 million level. This mark will allow the program to maintain its current high-level of impact on America's manufacturing community. It is our hope that through the conference process, Congress will again recognize the incredible impact and support of this program and continue to fully fund the program at \$106 million."

On June 29, 2006, the House provided only \$92 million for the MEP program within its fiscal year 2007 Science, State, Justice, and Commerce, the Judiciary and Related Agencies appropriations bill. ASMC will work with Congressional supporters during conference negotiations to ensure full funding for MEP.