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21 Governors Sign Letter of Support Requesting Funding for MEP

Washington, D.C. (March 13, 2008) – Tuesday, March 11, 2008, a joint Governor support letter signed by the Governors of 21 states was sent to the House and Senate Appropriators requesting Congress fully fund the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program at its authorized level of \$122 million in its fiscal year 2009 budget. The letter states, "Manufacturing continues to be the backbone of America's economy, yet recovery in this area is lagging behind other sectors of the economy. At this critical time, U.S. manufacturing needs our help more than ever. The MEP program provides this help to small and mid-sized manufacturers to modernize to stay competitive in our evolving marketplace. As a successful partnership between the federal government, states and small manufacturers, all stakeholders recognize that the MEP is important to business in our states and is a necessary component to national innovation and economic growth." The letter was signed by Governors of the following states: Michigan, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

In February, the President's fiscal year 2009 proposed budget included only \$4 million to remain at NIST to complete MEP program close down. This is the first year that the President has proposed complete program elimination, following five consecutive years of proposed severe cuts, all of which were unsuccessful. "The proposed cut to MEP in the president's 2009 budget is another example of the Bush Administration's refusal to advance policies that support American manufacturing and American workers," said Granholm. "Michigan needs a partner in Washington who will enforce unfair trade policies, provide assistance to workers whose jobs have been lost due to globalization, and who will support effective partnerships like the MEP." Governor Granholm led the joint Governors effort.

The American Small Manufacturers Coalition (ASMC), the trade association of NIST Hollings MEP Centers, has advocated for Congressional support of the program through its members and their manufacturer-clients. Mike Coast, Chairman of the ASMC and President of Michigan's NIST MEP affiliate, states "MEP Centers nationwide are extremely appreciative to the Governors for expressing their support for this program. The letter is just another means of showing the broad range of support the MEP program enjoys. It is our hope that efforts such as these will provide Congress the support they need to provide the MEP program its fully authorized level of \$122 million in FY09."

MEP is a network of 59 centers across all 50 states and Puerto Rico, with over 350 locations across the country, providing technical assistance and business support services to America's smaller manufacturers. An independent survey of 4,959 clients served by the program in federal fiscal year 2006 found that MEP clients attributed more than \$1.115 billion in cost savings to the program's assistance, as well as crediting its services with creating or retaining \$6.76 billion in sales. The program also helped manufacturers to create or retain a reported 52,585 jobs and to increase investment by \$1.65 billion.