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U.S. House of Representatives and Associations Support \$122 million for MEP

Washington, D.C. (March 19, 2008) – Today, a letter signed by 190 members of the U.S. House of Representatives, was sent to the House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies to request the authorized \$122 million in federal funding for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program in fiscal year 2009. The request letter was sponsored by the House Manufacturing Task Force and shows the broad bi-partisan support for the program.

The letter states, “A \$122 million appropriation for MEP in fiscal year 2009 is critical to the sustainability and growth of our domestic manufacturing sector... Manufacturing is one of our country’s greatest economic strengths and MEP is an invaluable program that helps manufacturers improve productivity and compete in the global marketplace...At a time when economic recovery, supply chain reliability for consumer and defense goods, and global competitiveness are national priorities, we believe MEP continues to be a wise investment.” 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.

Similarly, a group of 53 manufacturing and related associations have sent a joint letter of support to both House and Senate Appropriators reiterating the broad industry support for the program. The associations range from local manufacturing entities to nationally recognized business, manufacturing and professional organizations. The letter states, “We – the undersigned associations representing tens of thousands of U.S. manufacturers and millions of employees – respectfully urge you to fund the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) at \$122 million in the FY 2009 Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations Bill. This is the authorized level included in the recently enacted America COMPETES Act (PL 110-69) and is necessary to ensure the sustainability and growth of our domestic small manufacturing industry and its high-quality jobs.”

“The support for the MEP program is humbling -- from the continual, bipartisan House support to the market-affirming support of the numerous manufacturing and professional organizations nationwide. This program truly is a wonderful example of a productive, beneficial public/private partnership,” states Mike Coast, Chairman of the ASMC and President of Michigan’s NIST MEP affiliate. “On behalf of the MEP system nationwide, we can’t thank both of these groups enough and hope that House Appropriators can provide the funding requested by so many of their colleagues.”

On behalf of the MEP system nationwide, we are greatly appreciative of the ongoing Congressional support for the program. As the letter states, MEP is critical to the success of the manufacturing sector and the manufacturing sector is critical to the success of the economy,” said Mike Coast, Chairman, Chairman of the American Small Manufacturers Coalition. “It is our hope that with the help of our Senators and Representatives, we will be able to restore and grow the funding of important program to continue to serve manufacturers nationwide.”

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. 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.