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Senator Judd Gregg Honored for Support of Small Manufacturers *NH MEP Credits Gregg with Rescuing the Organization from Closure*

MERRIMACK, NH - In recognition of his tireless support of manufacturers in New Hampshire and across the country, Senator Judd Gregg, (R-NH), has been awarded the *2004 Legislator of the Year Award* from the American Small Manufacturers Coalition (ASMC) and the New Hampshire Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NH MEP).

Standing on the manufacturing floor of GT Equipment Technologies (GTi) in Merrimack, a manufacturer of equipment used to build solar-cell technologies, Gregg expressed his appreciation for the award but said accolades should go to the state's small and medium sized manufacturers.

"New Hampshire is home to some of the most innovative and talented entrepreneurs in the country, companies like GT Equipment Technologies, who represent a new generation of manufacturers in the fast-paced world economy," said Gregg. "I appreciate this honor to be here with you today, but the real recognition should go to all of you and the other members of the NH MEP."

Gregg has been instrumental in championing programs like the NH MEP and ASMC, two organizations dedicated to helping manufacturers thrive in the national and global marketplace. GTi has worked with the NH MEP in the past and the organizations have discussed working together in the future, but those plans were put in jeopardy when possible budget cuts were announced at the beginning of this year.

In January, the federal budget for the national MEP was cut by 60 percent, resulting in the near-closure of the NH MEP offices. This would have dealt a serious blow to local manufacturing companies that have increased or retained \$34.6 million in sales since 1999 thanks to their involvement with MEP programs.

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Recognizing that the NH MEP has been an invaluable resource for local manufacturers, Senator Gregg worked to restore and enhance the federal funding. Thanks to his support,

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the NH MEP is reinvigorated and can continue helping New Hampshire manufacturers gain an advantage over competitors overseas.

"Senator Gregg has proven time and again that he is an advocate for New Hampshire's small manufacturers," said Jack Metzemaekers, NH MEP board member and President of Scott Electronics in Salem. "Since the day the cuts were announced back in January, he worked to get the funding restored for the MEP at a national level. A portion of that funding will be used locally, reinvigorating the NH MEP at a time when all of our state's manufacturers need a strong ally."

With its budget back at operating levels, the NH MEP is growing. The program recently hired a new director of operations, is looking to add staff and is offering new services. Working with other area MEP offices, the organization has launched the New England Manufacturing Supply Chain, a program giving small and medium sized manufacturers access to previously unattainable Department of Defense contracts. The NH MEP is also working on an educational collaborative with the New Hampshire Community Technical Colleges to offer training in innovative manufacturing techniques.

"The New Hampshire manufacturing community plays a significant role in maintaining and improving the economic vitality of our state," said Gregg. "These federal programs help local firms in acquiring information that will help them grow their operations and compete around the world."

NH MEP is an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2,000 manufacturing and business "coaches" whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits and enhanced global competitiveness. NH MEP works in partnership with the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development. For more information on the services NH MEP project managers provide, contact the Concord office at 226-3200 or go to www.nhmep.org.

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