

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 18, 2008

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Byrd and Ranking Member Cochran:

We are writing to respectfully request that \$20 million for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) be included in the economic stimulus package that your Committee currently is preparing.

As you know, the MEP assists America's small manufacturers and helps boost productivity, sales and investment in modernization and employment. The MEP is the only nationwide program created specifically to help the 341,000 small manufacturers who serve as the backbone of our nation's economy. MEP Centers assist their customers to become innovative high-tech global competitors, to increase domestic manufacturers' contributions to national defense and homeland security, and to keep the economy strong with thousands of high-wage manufacturing jobs. As the Committee considers ways to stimulate our economic recovery through investments in infrastructure, we urge you to consider investing in manufacturing infrastructure through the MEP.

This year, both the Senate and House Appropriations Committees have recognized the importance of the MEP, funding it at \$110 million and \$122 million, respectively. An additional \$20 million in FY2008 funding would bring the MEP to the level authorized in the bipartisan America COMPETES Act (P.L. 110-69).

This funding would provide immediate assistance to manufacturers to maintain and improve their competitiveness. The funding would be provided through the MEP to its centers around the country to offset fees manufacturers pay for MEP services. These offsets would be limited to manufacturers with less than 100 employees, who are the first to feel the impact of the economic downturn. These offsets would help establish quicker and greater infrastructure improvements among these small manufacturers and allow them to keep cash in their pockets that they would otherwise pay to MEP centers. The results of this investment would include job creation and retention, sales increases and cost savings.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical request that will help American manufacturing and the economy as a whole.

Sincerely,


Olympia J. Snowe


Carl Levin



Herb Kohl



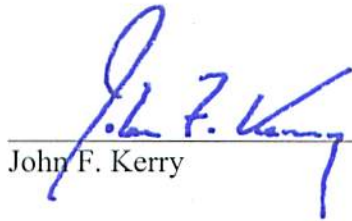
Debbie Stabenow



Edward M. Kennedy



Charles E. Schumer



John F. Kerry



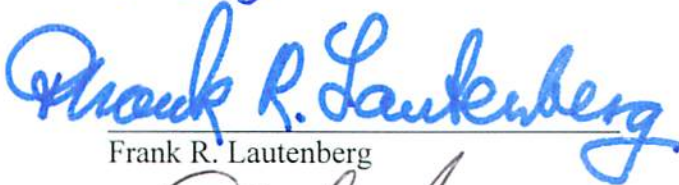
Joseph R. Biden, Jr.



Jeff Bingaman



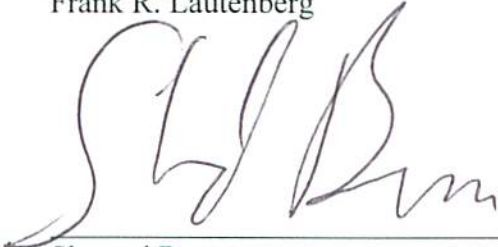
Elizabeth Dole



Frank R. Lautenberg



Mary L. Landrieu



Sherrod Brown



Ron Wyden



Christopher J. Dodd



Hillary Rodham Clinton



Robert P. Casey Jr.



Evan Bayh



Robert Menendez



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Kent Conrad



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