

Bipartisan bill from Senators Coons, Ayotte & Peters would support America's small manufacturers

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Bill would expand and improve a key federal program supporting small to medium-sized manufacturers in all 50 states

(Press Release - Office of Senator Chris Coons: 4-12-16) U.S. Senators Chris Coons (D-Del.), Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), and Gary Peters (D-Mich.) today introduced the *Manufacturing Extension Partnership Improvement Act*, which would expand and improve the MEP program to better serve small to medium-sized manufacturing companies. The Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is the only public-private partnership dedicated to providing technical support and services to small and medium-sized manufacturers.

“Manufacturing is the driving force behind America’s ability to innovate and is critical to our prosperity and competitiveness,” said Senator Coons. “The MEP program is one of the best resources for America’s manufacturing community and has helped countless businesses in Delaware and across the country grow and create jobs. This bill will expand the MEP program to better serve more small and medium-sized manufacturing companies that fuel our nation’s economic growth. Now is the time to invest in American manufacturing.”

“New Hampshire is a leader in the field of manufacturing and that is due in large part to the work of Zenagui Brahim and the rest of the team at the New Hampshire Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NH MEP). That’s why I’m proud to work across the aisle with my colleagues, Senators Coons (D-DE) and Gary Peters (D-MI), to introduce the Manufacturing Extension Partnership Improvement Act,” said Senator Ayotte. “We have so much potential for growth, and this bill will allow the NH MEP to create partnerships with local universities to start apprenticeship

programs. The bill focuses on all aspects of the manufacturing industry and also provides a mechanism for NH MEP to assist New Hampshire's smaller manufacturers. New Hampshire's future for manufacturing is incredibly bright, and this bill will help maximize that potential. "

"A strong, vibrant manufacturing sector is a critical part of our economy, and the MEP program helps ensure that American manufacturers can continue to grow and provide good-paying jobs in the United States," **said Senator Peters.** "I'm proud to join my colleagues to introduce this bipartisan legislation that will help MEP centers provide better support to small and mid-sized companies so they can continue to drive innovation and bolster our economic competitiveness around the world."

"The Manufacturing Extension Partnership helps U.S. companies produce and market Made in America goods throughout the world," **Scott Paul, President of Alliance for American Manufacturing.** "The MEP Improvement Act will make important reforms that will further benefit American workers and companies. The MEP's supplier scouting program links American-made goods with government procurement projects that are covered by Buy America preferences. This is smart policy, as it ensures American workers get the first shot at supplying products for these projects. That creates jobs and keeps taxpayer dollars here at home. We thank Sens. Coons, Ayotte, and Peters for introducing this legislation, and hope Congress takes swift action to pass it."

"AMT proudly supports the Manufacturing Extension Partnership Improvement Act," **said Douglas K. Woods, President, AMT - The Association For Manufacturing Technology.** "This bipartisan bill, introduced by Sens. Coons, Ayotte and Peters, will not only modernize the MEP program model to make it more efficient and valuable to manufacturers; it will also expand the scope of MEP centers to include access to manufacturing trends, tools, and technology — resources small and medium-sized manufacturers often don't have the capacity to find. AMT is a longtime supporter of the MEPs, and on behalf of AMT's more than 600 U.S.-based companies, I urge Congress to support this legislation."

"The American Small Manufacturers Coalition (ASMC) strongly supports the MEP Improvement Act because it provides necessary program resources and technical

changes that MEP needs to help American small manufacturers remain competitive in the global marketplace,” said Carrie Hines, President & CEO, ASMC. “Other countries with programs similar to MEP routinely outspend the United States in its federal support by as much as 12:1. The MEP Improvement Act provides an increased authorization level and cost share reduction that will allow the program to remain competitive with its international counterparts, so that it may reach more rural and small manufacturing clients, which make up the fabric of local economies and communities.”

The MEP program is the premier federal program addressing critical needs of small and medium-sized manufacturers. MEP centers offer resources that enable manufacturers to compete globally, support greater supply chain integration, and provide access to information, training, and technologies that improve efficiency, productivity, and profitability.

Built on a nationwide network of centers located in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, the MEP program is a partnership between the federal government and a variety of private sector entities that serve as trusted business advisors and technical experts to a variety of small to medium-sized manufacturers.

The *Manufacturing Extension Partnership Improvement Act* would:

- Permanently adjust the federal MEP cost share to one-to-one.
- Strengthen and clarify the MEP Center review process and require re-competition of MEP Center awards every 10 years.
- Authorize MEP Centers to support the development of manufacturing-related apprenticeship, internship and industry-recognized certification programs.
- Increase the MEP program authorization level to \$260 million per year through 2020.
- Require the MEP program to develop open-access resources describing best practices for America’s small manufacturers.

The bill has been endorsed by Information Technology and Innovation Foundation; American Small Manufacturers Coalition; Alliance for American Manufacturing; Honda North America, Inc.; Association for Manufacturing Technology; National

Council for Advanced Manufacturing; Manufacturing Skill Standards Council; and Delaware Manufacturing Extension Partnership.