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Majority of Senate Supports MEP

Washington, D.C. (March 29, 2006) – Almost two-thirds of the United States Senators have requested \$106 million in federal funding for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program in fiscal 2007. The request letter, sponsored by the Senate Manufacturing Task Force, was sent to Senate Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Commerce Justice, State, the Judiciary and Related Agencies on March 29, 2006.

Sixty-three senators signing the Manufacturing Task Force's letter note: "MEP is one of the most successful federal/state partnerships in government. Manufacturing is one of our greatest economic strengths and MEP is invaluable program that helps manufacturers improve productivity and compete in the global marketplace." In addition to the Senate letter, Congress further demonstrated its deep, bipartisan support for the MEP program in the recently passed fiscal 2007 budget resolution. The House Manufacturing Task Force sponsored a similar letter to House Appropriators on March 17, 2006 which was co-signed by a bipartisan majority of 223 members of the House of Representatives.

"We are humbled by the Senate's support for the program. It is our hope that this support, in combination with the recent House request, can help restore the federal funding for this critical manufacturing program," said Mike Coast, Chairman, Chairman of the American Small Manufacturers Coalition. "This letter is further indication of the incredible success and impact the MEP program has on U.S. manufacturers and the U.S. economy."

Similarly, a bipartisan group of governors have asked House and Senate appropriators to provide \$106 million for the MEP program. That letter was sponsored by Governor Jennifer Granholm (D-MI) and Governor Bob Taft (R-OH) and was co-signed by the governors of 15 additional states, including Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. This letter comes in addition to individual letters of support written by the Governors of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin to the White House requesting Administration support of the MEP program.

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. The Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) is a network of 59 centers, with over 350 locations across the country and in Puerto Rico, providing technical assistance and business support services to America's small manufacturers. The public/private program, which served 16,448 in fiscal year 2005,

report over \$721 million in cost savings directly attributed to the program's assistance as well as creating or retaining over \$4.532 billion in sales. The program also helped manufacturers create or retain 43,624 jobs and increase investment of \$941 million back into the economy based on an independent survey of 4,644 clients served by the program in federal fiscal year 2004.