

Snowe calls for increased funding for manufacturing program

May 13, 2004

WASHINGTON -- Fifty-five senators, led by Herb Kohl and Olympia Snowe, sent a letter Thursday to Commerce Secretary Donald Evans urging him to restore funding for a program meant to help small manufacturers.

Kohl, D-Wis., and Snowe, R-Maine, said funding for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership is \$39.6 million this year, compared with last year's level of \$106.6 million.

The Manufacturing Extension Partnership is a network of assistance centers around the country that provides technical assistance, support services and business advice to small manufacturers.

"MEP centers have closed 58 regional offices and reduced staffing by 15 percent," the senators wrote.

They said those cuts will hurt small manufacturers nationwide. The senators urged Evans to tap unspent money in other areas to restore funding.

Commerce Department spokesman Dan Nelson said the agency was reviewing the letter and had no immediate comment.

The Senate initially approved funding at last year's level, but the amount was reduced during House-Senate negotiations.