

**SNOWE, LIEBERMAN PRAISE INCREASED FUNDING FOR  
MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP IN FY 2005 OMNIBUS  
APPROPRIATIONS BILL**

*Senators Co-Chair Senate Task Force on Manufacturing*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Olympia J. Snowe (R-Maine) and Joe Lieberman (D-CT), Co-Chairs of the Senate Task Force on Manufacturing, today said that the inclusion of \$109 million in funding for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2005 Omnibus Appropriations bill will help small and medium-sized American manufacturers modernize to compete in the demanding global marketplace.

“I am pleased that Senate Appropriators provided \$109 million for the MEP for the fiscal year 2005, in recognition of the vital services that the Manufacturing Extension Partnership provides to the nation’s small and medium-sized manufacturers. Funding cuts in FY 2004, coupled with potential shortfalls in FY 2005 funding, threatened to severely curtail the MEP’s ability to assist the nation’s manufacturers at a time when they most need assistance,” Snowe said. “While many federal programs are feeling the pains of fiscal constraints, this appropriation is a testament to the continued success of MEP to strengthen the competitiveness of our domestic small manufacturers and create high-paying jobs in our communities.”

“The strength of Connecticut’s and the nation’s manufacturing sector is essential to our economic success and public-private programs like the Manufacturing Extension Partnership have proven successful at giving the sector a much-needed boost,” Lieberman said. “The \$109 million included in this year’s appropriations bill will ensure that the program continues its success.”

The MEP is a nationwide network of not-for-profit centers in over 400 locations nationwide, whose sole purpose is to provide small and medium-sized manufacturers with the help they need in implementing the most advanced manufacturing technologies and processes to succeed as the country competes with low wage countries such as China and India. The centers, serving all 50 states and Puerto Rico, are linked together through the Department of Commerce’s National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

Earlier this year, Snowe and Lieberman led a group of 56 Senators in a bipartisan letter calling on the Senate Appropriations Committee to provide funding for a successful program to help stop the manufacturing crisis and keep small manufacturers productive and competitive.

Under the FY 2004 Omnibus Appropriations Conference Report, MEP funding was drastically cut from a previous level of \$106 million to \$39.6 million for the nationwide program. The FY 2005 bill restored that funding from \$39.6 million to \$109 million.

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