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Snowe Applauds Passage of America COMPETES Act

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Olympia J. Snowe (R-ME) today applauded the Senate’s passage of the America COMPETES Act, legislation that is designed to make the nation more globally competitive. The Senate passed the measure, which would increase research investment and strengthen educational opportunities in science technology, engineering and mathematics, by a strong 88-8 margin on April 25. As an original cosponsor of the bill, Senator Snowe was particularly pleased that the Senate approved amendments she offered to improve the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program and include the Administrator of the Small Business Administration (SBA) on the President’s Council on Innovation and Competitiveness.

“The COMPETES Act offers a comprehensive approach to ensuring America remains competitive worldwide,” said Senator Snowe. “In the near term, this legislation will drive technological innovation by funding for scientific research. For example, it would double the authorized funding for the National Science Foundation over the next five years. Over the longer term, the bill will help increase living standards by preparing the next generation of scientists and engineers to compete in the global marketplace.”

Senator Snowe was successful in sponsoring and cosponsoring several amendments that were included in the Senate-passed bill:

With respect to the MEP program, Senator Snowe sponsored an amendment to clarify program centers’ ability to acquire non-Federal matching funds. Specifically, the amendment would deem cost share requirements to have been met when MEP centers partnered or entered into other agreements with other organizations meeting the needs of American manufacturers. Senator Snowe also cosponsored an amendment Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI) offered to increase authorized funding for the MEP program, ensuring it will reach more manufacturers while providing them with an enhanced set of services.

“The MEP program has helped to create a level playing field for small manufacturers competing globally and creating good jobs here at home,” said Senator Snowe. “Small manufacturers employ over six million Americans and are one of country’s greatest economic strengths. The MEP program is invaluable because it helps our manufacturers improve productivity and compete worldwide.”

The Maine MEP has estimated that from April 2005 through March 2006, MEP’s overall affect on Maine’s economy included: (a) creating or retaining 1,262 jobs that paid a total of \$50.1 million in employee wages and benefits; (b) increasing or retaining economic output worth \$175.1 million; (c) contributing or retaining \$85.4 million of gross state product; and (d) generating or retaining over \$23.4 million in additional tax and non-tax revenues at the federal, state and local government levels, including \$6.2 million at the state and local levels.

Finally, Senator Snowe sponsored an amendment to include the SBA Administrator on the President’s Council on Innovation and Competitiveness. The Council will be responsible for monitoring and advising the President on initiatives for promoting innovation, making it critical that America’s small businesses, which are at the forefront of innovation, are represented.

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