

HOUSE GOP SHOOTS DOWN LARSON AMENDMENT TO AID U.S. MANUFACTURERS

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - An amendment offered by U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-1) that would have revamped the current Technology Administration to focus on the needs of manufacturers and create a new Undersecretary position within the U.S. Department of Commerce, was voted down today by House Republicans. The new position would have coordinated assistance for struggling American manufacturers. Larson offered the amendment to the Manufacturing Technology Competitiveness Act, H.R. 3598. The amendment failed largely along party lines, 170-189.

"If the Republican Leadership put as much energy into passing legislation to aid manufacturers as they do in choking the democratic process in the House, perhaps the manufacturing sector would not be in such dire straits today," said Larson. "My amendment was supported by a broad coalition of both business and labor leaders throughout the state including the Manufacturing Alliance of Connecticut and the machinists union, yet the Republican Majority refused to support it. American manufacturers have been hit hard in recent years by stiff foreign competition and declining research and development funding and wanted a high-level point of contact in federal government to coordinate support during these difficult times. The failure of this amendment stopped that effort in its tracks, and the Majority Leadership has again failed American manufacturers and workers. It is unfortunate that efforts to create jobs and help our economy were made partisan."

While President Bush created an Assistant Secretary for Manufacturing and Services within the International Trade Administration, the ITA does not have the expertise to address the full range of manufacturing issues such as training, skills development, education, research and technology development and manufacturing infrastructure. Manufacturers would like an Undersecretary of Manufacturing that can speak on their behalf, serve as a senior point of contact for the sector and will coordinate federal manufacturing-related activities. The amendment was fiscally responsible because it took the Technology Administration, which already has a budget request of \$8 million for next year, and focused it on manufacturing and competitiveness. The National Coalition for Advanced Manufacturing (NACFAM) supports this approach.

The amendment would have:

Ø Re-oriented the current Technology Administration (TA), the Undersecretary of Technology, and the Office of Technology Policy (OTP) towards manufacturing and competitiveness issues.

Ø Re-focused TA by establishing a Manufacturing and Technology Administration.

Ø Created an Undersecretary of Manufacturing and Technology supported by an Assistant Secretary for Manufacturing, an Assistant Secretary for Technology, and an Office of Manufacturing and Technology Policy.

The Undersecretary would have been a senior contact for the manufacturing sector and would have coordinated and integrated federal manufacturing-related support. The Manufacturing Administration would have conducted broad-based manufacturing and technology policy analysis as well as coordinated with states, local governments and universities on manufacturing and technology activities, including education and training.

The amendment's language was taken from a larger manufacturing bill Larson originally introduced in April, the American Workers and Manufacturers Support Act, H.R. 4177. That legislation is an 8-point plan to boost and protect U.S. manufacturers.

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