

LARSON AMENDMENT TO BOOST MANUFACTURING MOVES AHEAD FOR VOTE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) will urge fellow Representatives Wednesday to strengthen the proposed Manufacturing Technology Competitiveness Act (H.R. 250) by approving his amendment to create a strong advocate who can build and back a coherent policy that creates jobs.

He thanked the House Rules Committee Tuesday for sending his plan, which would elevate support for manufacturing issues within the Administration, to the House floor for a vote Wednesday. The plan will be taken up with other amendments to the bill.

“Our nation’s manufacturers need a voice in the policies that directly affect them,” Larson said. “Since 2001, nearly 3 million Americans employed in manufacturing have lost their jobs - 110,000 in 2005 alone. Almost 57,000 of these jobs have been lost in Connecticut.”

Larson’s amendment calls for reorienting the existing Technology Administration within the Department of Commerce to place more emphasis on manufacturing competitiveness and job growth.

The amendment creates an Undersecretary of Manufacturing and Technology, who would be supported by an Assistant Secretary for Manufacturing, an Assistant Secretary of Technology and an Office of Manufacturing and Technology Policy. The Technology Administration itself would be renamed the Office of Manufacturing and Technology.

Two years ago, President Bush created a “manufacturing czar” – an Assistant Undersecretary for Manufacturing and Services within the International Trade Administration (ITA). Buried deep within the Commerce Department’s layers, the position has not provided the attention, focus or unified vision required, Larson said.

“Creating a position this far down the chain, with no resources to get the job done, clearly signals the relative inattention the Administration is giving the continuing loss of our manufacturing jobs.”

The reorganization and higher profile that Larson is proposing would provide what the manufacturing czar has not: the expertise required to address the full range of manufacturing issues that employers and employees face, including training, skills development, education, research and technology development, and manufacturing infrastructure.

“Manufacturing has been pivotal to America’s economic strength and dominance,” Larson said. “It kept us ahead in the know-how, innovation and fair-paying jobs that enabled America to achieve the highest general standard of living in the world. But the manufacturing base that supported that shared prosperity is threatened. Each year, the erosion is being felt on the economy and in the lives of Americans whose livelihoods have been shipped abroad despite their hard work and efficiency. This is not just cause for worry. This is a demand for action.”

Manufacturing lay-offs have a profound impact beyond the number of jobs cut, Larson said. For example:

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Each manufacturing job supports two non-manufacturing positions. That means at least 8.4 million people have been affected, directly or indirectly, because of the loss of American manufacturing to overseas companies.

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According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 14.3 million Americans are currently employed in the manufacturing sector.

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In addition, manufacturing contributes roughly 15% of our nation’s gross domestic product, provides 77% of our exports, and funds 67% of our nation’s investment in research and development.

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