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NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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Washington, D.C. — Reps. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and Bart Stupak (D-MI), Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, protested the Administration's proposal to cut virtually all Federal funding for the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program during a budget oversight hearing for the Department of Commerce today.

"I am disappointed that the Administration proposes drastic funding cuts to the MEP program in its Fiscal Year 2009 budget request," said Dingell. "At a time of economic hardship for this country's manufacturing workers and businesses, the Administration's virtual evisceration of a program like MEP, which has created thousands of jobs and generated billions in sales, is indescribably irresponsible."

It is estimated that in 2006 alone, MEP created nearly 53,000 domestic jobs and generated almost \$6.8 billion in sales for U.S. manufacturing companies. Nevertheless, the Administration requests that funding for MEP be cut to only \$4 million in 2009. In budget submissions to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, this budget reduction is intended for the orderly discontinuation of the program;

“Discontinuing federal funding for the MEP program, as the President’s budget proposes, would inhibit U.S. competitiveness in an increasingly global economy,” Stupak said. “The Administration has provided no reasonable justification for gutting this vital program. Their proposal puts MEP centers across the country in jeopardy at a time when the jobs and private investment they help create are needed the most.”

In 2007, Congress passed the America COMPETES Act, which authorized funding for MEP in the amount of \$122 million.

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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