



THE ASSOCIATION & VOICE OF THE US SEWN PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) and Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), alongside U.S. Representatives Norma Torres (D-Calif.-35) and Chuck Fleischmann (R-Tenn.-03), today introduced the bipartisan, bicameral [National Manufacturing Extension Partnership \(MEP\) Supply Chain Database Act](#). This legislation would establish a national database with information about the interconnectivity of manufacturers in the United States supply chain. The database would help prevent future supply chain disruptions by offering manufacturers key information as they make decisions on how to retool in critical areas to meet the demand for key products, such as defense supplies, food, and medical devices.

“The COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep vulnerabilities in our own national supply chains that we are still dealing with as a country and that make us susceptible during moments of crisis,” **said Sen. Menendez**. “Future pandemics, natural disasters, cyber-attacks, raw material shortages, and even trade disputes could cripple our supply chains right when we need to engage them most in order to deliver critical goods to the American public. That’s why I’m proud to introduce this bipartisan, bicameral bill to ensure the federal government has a critical tool that could give us reliable information about American manufacturers’ capabilities and inventories in order to prevent future disruptions should a future crisis arise.”

“We’ve all seen how the supply chain crisis is hurting businesses and consumers across the country, from product shortages to rapidly rising prices and job loss,” **said Sen. Blackburn**. This legislation will help bring needed transparency to manufacturers and businesses struggling to get their supply chains back on track. It will also keep states at the forefront of the conversation to ensure that states like Tennessee that lead the nation in manufacturing have the data they need to make critical operational decisions.”

“At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw to a devastating degree how vulnerable our supply chains are, especially for crucial goods like personal protective equipment. We also saw the good that was done when local businesses and small manufacturers stepped up to meet the challenge. This legislation will help patch those holes, prevent similar breakdowns, and create infrastructure for American small manufacturers to play a key role in future crises,” **said Congresswoman Torres**. “And while a global public health crisis is an acute example of why strong supply chains are so critical, this isn’t just important for times of emergency. When we can spot supply chain weaknesses before they reach American consumers, our entire economy is more stable. The database will greatly help the day-to-day operations for American manufacturers by better connecting them with opportunities and needs, which means more jobs and better pay in our communities.”

“Over the last year, Tennesseans and Americans across our country have seen the fragility of our nation’s supply chain. I am proud to help introduce this bipartisan, bicameral piece of legislation that will provide increased visibility into our domestic manufacturing supply chain system,” **said Congressman Fleischmann**.

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As demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, a national overview of our manufacturing supply chain would help avoid future bottlenecks. During the early stages of the pandemic, states understood what was produced in their states, but were generally unaware of how dependent in-state manufacturing was on out-of-state resources. This legislation would help close this gap in available information about America's manufacturing supply chains by leveraging the Hollings MEP program of the National Institute Standards and Technology (NIST) to create the National MEP Supply Chain Database and connect MEP centers through this national database. The MEP program is a federal public-private partnership that provides small and medium-sized manufacturers technology-based services these firms need to grow and thrive in today's economy and create well-paying manufacturing jobs.

The MEP National Network includes [51 MEP Centers located in all 50 states and Puerto Rico](#) supported by more than 1,400 advisors and experts at approximately 375 MEP service locations. According to [clients surveyed in FY 2020](#), the MEP National Network helped manufacturers achieve \$13.0 billion in sales, \$2.7 billion in cost savings, \$4.9 billion in new client investments, and helped to create and retain 105,748 U.S. manufacturing jobs.

The National MEP Supply Chain Database Act is supported by the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program and the American Small Manufacturers Coalition.

"Many people are now just coming to the realization that our U.S. supply chain is compromised, but NJMEP's discussions on this topic with Senator Menendez began 5-years ago," **said John Kennedy, CEO of the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program.** "Over this time, a viable plan to map and control our supply chain nationally has been developed, which would implement a robust database that draws on the considerable strength brought forward by the MEP National Network. Again, this has been a long journey, and without the leadership and vision of Senators Menendez and Blackburn, as well as Representatives Torres and Fleischmann, we do not get to a place where 'The National Supply Chain Database Act of 2021' becomes a reality with bipartisan and bicameral support. There is no 'immediate fix', but this is a great step forward."

"The National Supply Chain Database bill will allow manufacturers to better understand their supply chains to potentially mitigate the risks they are experiencing now due to the pandemic," **said Carrie Hines, President and CEO of the American Small Manufacturers Coalition.** "We are exceptionally thankful for the leadership of Senators Menendez and Blackburn and Representatives Torres and Fleischmann for not only recognizing the need but also establishing the database within the one public/private program that can bring it to fruition – the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP)."



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Sen. Menendez has been a leader on this issue and a strong supporter of the Hollings MEP program. With the onset of the pandemic last year, the senator highlighted vulnerabilities in our manufacturing supply chains when the pandemic initially affected medical supply chains, including personal protective equipment, and therefore introduced this bill as an amendment to 2020's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The NDAA conference report from last year [instructed NIST to conduct a feasibility study](#) on the need for a national supply chain database that ultimately determined that it was both feasible and advisable to establish such a national supply chain database. Senators Menendez and Blackburn [reintroduced this bill as an amendment to this year's NDAA](#) and is pursuing all options to pass this critical piece of legislation to help address future disruptions in the supply chain.

A copy of the bill text can be found [here](#).