

**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

NEIL L. BRADLEY
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT &
CHIEF POLICY OFFICER

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July 26, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairman Leahy:

As the Committee prepares to mark up the Fiscal Year 2018 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce urges you to provide for programs and initiatives important to the business community, and makes the following recommendations. Given the need to restrain overall federal spending and the discretionary spending caps currently in effect, the Chamber urges you to focus federal resources on projects and activities that offer the greatest potential to contribute to an environment conducive to stronger economic growth.

- Support full funding for the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Program. The MEP program helps manufacturers become more competitive by improving their productivity, leveraging private sector investments, and assisting the U.S. industrial base to become an innovative high tech global competitor. The Chamber urges greater investment in the program by providing at least \$100 million for qualified MEP centers.
- Support fully funding the Census Bureau and the American Community Survey for FY18. ACS data points are critical for business decision-making and long range planning. The business community uses census information daily to drive sound investment decisions affecting the allocation of resources throughout the country. The Economic Census provides important statistics that are critical to the competitiveness of U.S. business and industry. The Chamber and business community remain concerned that cuts to the Census Bureau's budget at this time could have a damaging effect for quality data collection.
- In addition to meeting the Census Bureau's funding needs for the ACS, the Chamber strongly urges you to support full funding for the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). Full funding would enable the BEA to continue its critical work to improve the quality and depth of important economic data, improve the accuracy

of GDP estimates, speed up the release of regional statistics, and provide business investment data on an annual basis.

- Support an increase in funding to \$58 million for the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR). USTR is tasked with leading the charge on U.S. trade negotiations, such as those with Canada and Mexico relating to modernization of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which will prove a major inter-agency undertaking. USTR is also charged with enforcement of other bilateral and plurilateral trade agreements as well as those reached under the World Trade Organization (WTO). Full funding is needed to strengthen the ability of USTR—one of the smallest and most efficient agencies in the U.S. government—to open international markets to U.S. goods and services and ensure effective enforcement of U.S. trade agreements for the American people. The Chamber also urges the Committee to support full funding for the U.S. Department of Commerce’s International Trade Administration, which also provides essential technical and regional expertise relating to trade negotiations and enforcement.
- Support increased funding for the Department of Justice and the FBI to enhance their efforts to combat cybercrime, terrorism, and espionage. The Chamber supports increasing the resources that law enforcement agencies have to counter and mitigate cyber threats internationally.
- Support provisions in the legislation prohibiting the Department of Justice from entering into civil settlements that require donations to organizations that are not parties to the litigation. This practice raises serious separation of powers concerns and undermines Congress’s exclusive appropriations authority. Congress alone has the power of the purse, and agencies should not be allowed to circumvent the appropriations process to fund special interest groups. The Chamber opposes any amendment designed to weaken or eliminate this language from the bill.
- Support increased funding for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) related to the voluntary Framework for Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity, including providing concise and consistent resources to small and midsize businesses (SMBs) on using the framework and promoting the framework internationally. The Chamber is concerned with any reduction in NIST funding for the industry-government efforts on cybersecurity, including the voluntary Framework for Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity. The Department of Commerce, especially NIST, did an admirable job convening many organizations to develop the Framework, which has been a remarkable success. NIST undertakes critical tasks with the private sector on cybersecurity, such as protecting the Internet of Things, and the Chamber believes that the department is well-positioned to convene IoT stakeholders to identify existing standards and guidance.
- Support inclusion of a provision that would block funding for implementation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s revised EEO-1 Form.

The Chamber appreciates your consideration of these recommendations as you mark up the Fiscal Year 2018 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Neil L. Bradley", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Neil L. Bradley

cc: Members of the Committee on Appropriations