

Recommendations and Next Steps

The recommendations that follow are designed to address the challenges identified by U.S. manufacturers over the course of the Commerce Department's roundtable discussions. These recommendations represent a step toward building the comprehensive strategy called for by Secretary Evans to ensure "that the government is doing all it can to create the conditions" that would enhance U.S. economic growth and manufacturing competitiveness.

These recommendations start from the premise that it is manufacturers and their actions in the marketplace that will define their success, spur economic growth, and create jobs. The government's role is not to interfere with that process, but rather to foster it. For government, creating the conditions for success in the marketplace means focusing on economic fundamentals, such as encouraging economic growth and innovation in the private sector and reducing the cost of government policies on U.S. manufacturers. It also means regulating only when absolutely necessary and then with a view toward minimizing unwarranted costs.

This same basic approach informs the recommendations on international economic policy and trade. The recommendations are designed to encourage governments to open markets and eliminate trade practices that distort markets for

goods, capital, and labor. They are also designed to foster compliance with the rules governing the international trading system so that it is competition in the marketplace, rather than government intervention, that determines success.

The recommendations include proposals that demand immediate action by Congress and new activities that can be pursued under existing authority to strengthen current efforts to support U.S. manufacturers. A number of recommendations also provide direction for broad-based reforms that will require coordinated effort over the long term. The new Assistant Secretary of Commerce, called for by President Bush in his September 4, 2003, Labor Day address, will be responsible for coordinating the administration's efforts to implement these recommendations.

The recommendations are divided into the following six sections:

- Enhancing Government's Focus on Manufacturing Competitiveness
- Creating the Conditions for Economic Growth and Manufacturing Investment
- Lowering the Cost of Manufacturing in the United States
- Investing in Innovation
- Strengthening Education, Retraining, and Economic Diversification
- Promoting Open Markets and a Level Playing Field