



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20230

March 1, 2001

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman, Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6125

Dear Mr. Chairman:

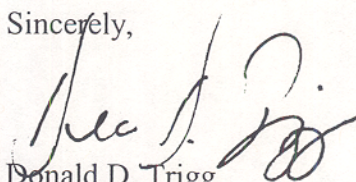
On February 14, 2001, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 524, "The Electronic Commerce Enhancement Act." H.R. 524 is a bill that directs the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to offer information to small and medium-sized manufacturing companies that are interested in purchasing electronic commerce hardware or software. The bill also expands the authority of NIST's Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program to advise the manufacturing industry on high technology. The Department of Commerce supports the goal of increasing business utilization of electronic commerce technologies that rests at the heart of H.R. 524. We would, however, like to express some reservation with one component of the House-passed bill.

Section 201(b) requires the Director of NIST to "submit to the Congress a plan for enterprise integration for each major manufacturing industry" with cost estimates for Government and industry and annual updates. This planning role goes beyond NIST's historic role in this area, particularly the highly dynamic electronic commerce field. Under its current authority, NIST helps industries as a facilitator in industry-led road maps and assessments. In addition, they provide technical support for standards development.

We would hope the Senate might move to clarify section 201(b) to establish clearly the lead role of industry in addressing issues of enterprise integration, and delineating in a more focused manner the appropriate supportive role that can be played by the Department of Commerce.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the submission of this letter from the standpoint of the Administration's program. We appreciate your willingness to consider our opinions in this area. We look forward to the prospect of working with you in this critical area in the months ahead.

Sincerely,


Donald D. Trigg
Director of the Office of Policy
and Strategic Planning

cc: The Honorable Ernest F. Hollings