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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “Our Nation of Builders: Manufacturing in America”
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
February 14, 2013

I want to thank Mr. Terry for holding this hearing and to congratulate him on his new chairmanship of this important Subcommittee. I also welcome Ms. Schakowsky as the Subcommittee’s new Democratic Ranking Member. I look forward to working with both of you – and all of our colleagues – as we continue our oversight of interstate commerce and strive to ensure commonsense consumer protections for all Americans.

A strong manufacturing sector is vital to our identity as a nation. It is the source of countless scientific breakthroughs and is essential to maintaining our national defense capabilities. Manufacturing is also a key building block for a strong and stable middle class in this country.

In my home state of California, the manufacturing sector adds more than \$200 billion to the economy and employs more than 1.2 million people.

In the Los Angeles area, the South Bay region is one of the country’s greatest centers of defense and aerospace manufacturing, and I have the great honor of being elected to represent this area. It is also home to several promising manufacturers of energy efficiency technology. This morning, I was proud to showcase examples of manufacturing from El Segundo and Redondo Beach in my district. Nano H2O displayed an industry-leading, energy-efficient reverse osmosis membrane that it has developed for desalination purposes, and Northrop Grumman displayed two aerospace products it is manufacturing for the federal government: the Navy’s F/A-18 Super Hornet strike fighter and NASA’s James Webb Space Telescope.

This is something that President Obama and his Administration clearly recognize. The Obama Administration has a number of initiatives underway to bolster American manufacturing.

Tuesday's State of the Union address reaffirmed the President's dedication to making the nation a "magnet for new jobs and manufacturing" through the development of Manufacturing Innovation Institutes. The President's proposals for targeted, deficit-neutral investments in education, infrastructure, and clean energy will also help grow the manufacturing sector.

There is one big threat to manufacturing looming on the horizon. For the health of the manufacturing sector – and the economy as a whole – Congress should work to avert the massive, arbitrary spending cuts set to take effect on March 1. The sequester should be replaced with a balanced, responsible deficit reduction plan. It is time we return certainty and predictability to our manufacturers, small businesses, American families, and our entire economy.

Our manufacturing sector has accomplished great things. The U.S. can continue to be at the forefront of global manufacturing, creating transformative technologies for years to come – but Congress must do its part. We can't expect our economy to rebound if we keep dragging the economy down with obstacles to growth like the sequester.

I'm looking forward to the testimony of our witnesses.

Thank you.