Manufacturers Need More Qualified Employees

Manufacturers are struggling to find qualified employees to fill new job orders. Many job applicants lack fundamental skills and others are not aware of opportunities in manufacturing industries.

An April 2013 survey conducted by the North American Die Casting Association found that of all respondents, 66% have job openings and 95% have severe or moderate challenges recruiting qualified employees to fill those positions. A study by Deloitte and the Manufacturing Institute shows there are currently over 600,000 skilled job openings in the country.

The answer in Washington to workforce issues is too often to throw money at a training program. Manufacturers need targeted policies which focus on recruiting, training, and placing employees in in-demand jobs. We cannot take a one-size fits all approach to addressing our workforce shortages. A manufacturer in one part of the country may need a machine operator while in a different region the demand for welders is greater. NADCA believes local businesses and the community leaders should decide which programs receive priority funding and which jobs have the most openings in the region.

In addition to the immediate needs, we must attract the next generation of manufacturers. Businesses need to play a direct role in establishing K-12 curriculum. We must help educators develop programs that better prepare students for the workforce and inform them about opportunities in manufacturing industries. Associations like NADCA have the expertise and resources needed to partner with educators and trainers to develop curriculum for the next generation of manufacturers.

Manufacturing supported an estimated 17.5 million jobs in the United States in 2011; this includes 11.7 million jobs directly within manufacturing and 5.8 million jobs in other sectors such as accounting, transportation, agriculture, and real estate. After total compensation, on average a manufacturer earned nearly $80,000 in 2012, proving that manufacturing provides family-sustaining career opportunities.

We recognize governments at all levels are in tight budget environments but some job training programs do work while many others need reform. A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report showed that in FY2009, 47 federal government job training programs overlapped costing $18 billion per year. We need to focus on the programs which can work and delegate more authority over these programs to the local community leaders instead of bureaucrats in Washington and state capitals around the country.

NADCA believes:

- Congress should pass a bipartisan Workforce Investment Act (WIA) bill – the WIA law covers dozens of job training programs which lawmakers have not reformed in years;
- Congress must pass the America Works Act, S. 453 and H.R. 497, which prioritizes funding for programs supporting in-demand jobs with industry recognized skills;
- Washington should promote career opportunities in manufacturing among parents, students, and career counselors.