

(March 12, 2007) Floor Statement on H.R. 1126

U.S. House of Representatives

Floor Statement - H.R. 1126

Congressman Daniel Lipinski

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I rise today to support H.R. 1126, legislation reauthorizing the Steel and Aluminum Energy Conservation and Technology Competitiveness Act of 1988, also known as the Metals Initiative.

Today, the steel industry and other metals industries - including aluminum and copper - are important parts of our national economy, and they must remain innovative in order to stay competitive in the increasingly global economy. It is vital to ensure that these industries are fully prepared to confront the challenges they face. This bill will help develop the innovative tools needed to grow valuable American jobs and businesses, and to protect the environment, by tapping into good old-fashioned American ingenuity.

Originally passed by the 100th Congress, the Metals Initiative authorizes federal cost sharing of research whose goals are threefold: first, enhancing energy-efficiency, second, increasing the competitiveness of American industries, and third, improving the environment through reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. More specifically, this legislation promotes collaborative, public-private cost-shared research between American industry, the Department of Energy, and institutions of higher education. The bill would reauthorize the Metals Initiative at \$12 million per year from Fiscal Year 2008 through 2012 to fund advanced metals research.

The success of the American steel industry has a special personal significance for me. My father-in-law was a steelworker at Bethlehem Steel in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, before his plant closed due to foreign competition. This bill will help prevent further losses of good American jobs like his, by using American innovation to increase the competitiveness of our domestic industry.

While American industries have significantly modernized, the pace of technology and the competition from overseas is relentless. Reauthorization of this bill is essential to grow American jobs, keep the customers of metals industries strong, and assure that we have a domestic supply of the materials we need for our national defense.

The results of this program speak for themselves. Since its inception, the Metals Initiative has delivered numerous technologies to the factory floor, resulting in incredible environmental and energy savings while increasing the competitive position of the steel industry and the domestic manufacturing sector. In the Chicago area, schools such as my alma mater Northwestern University have participated in this program, along with companies such as IPSCO. Because of advances made in steel production, partially through the industry's partnership with DOE, the steel industry as a whole used 28% less energy per ton in 2004 than it did in 1990.

In addition, this research has produced several successful and important technological breakthroughs, including the development of advanced high strength steels and Ultra-Light Weight Steel Automobile Bodies, leading to lighter, safer, and more energy-efficient cars. Recently these advanced technologies were applied to a new, lightweight military vehicle, yielding performance improvements including 25% weight savings and 50% fuel efficiency improvement. Through this partnership program, the U.S. Army now has a next generation tactical vehicle that is agile and responsive. These advances, applied to the civilian versions of the vehicle, add a substantial further positive impact to our nation's economy.

It is also important to note that the federal funds in this program are given to the schools to conduct the research. Companies are not the recipients of funds and they must provide a share of the cost of the research. But the American company that provides that match has the first opportunity to take advantage of the research findings and improve their manufacturing operations, benefiting American workers.

H.R. 1126 is simply a great example of how public-private partnerships can benefit American workers and taxpayers, while saving energy, improving the environment, and accelerating the development and implementation of modern technology.

All Americans benefit from common sense programs such as this one, and I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1126.