

Remarks Prepared for Delivery
Jay Timmons, President and CEO
National Association of Manufacturers
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Good afternoon. Thank you, Eric, for that introduction—and more importantly, for the chance to be back in my home state of Ohio. I love any chance to come back.

I'm sure it's clear to anyone who is here and has joined this summit today: this is an outstanding and effective association with dedicated and driven leadership. Eric Burkland is a best in class leader, and you in the OMA have made a great investment decision.

And as the leader of a national association, I'm just so thankful we have great partners in this state that is so critical to the future of manufacturing in America.

So, thank you for being here. Thanks to the OMA for everything you do, and for taking your efforts to build the modern manufacturing workforce to the next level.

I also want to recognize another great leader who's here today. That's Steve Staub, President of Staub Manufacturing Solutions.

Steve has become kind of a star around the National Association of Manufacturers. He's featured in some of our ads about the manufacturing agenda, and we've been proud to spotlight his leadership—as well as the President's visit to his great facility and Steve's visit to the White House. Thank you, Steve, for being an advocate for our cause.

This summit couldn't come at a more important time. Here in Ohio and across America, manufacturing workers with modern, technical skills are in high-demand. We have hundreds of thousands of positions open today. And every day, that demand grows...to 3.5 million over the next decade.

According to the NAM's Manufacturers Outlook Survey, manufacturers are more optimistic about the future of their businesses than at any point in the 20 years we've been doing our survey. More than ever, they want to expand and hire and attract new customers. The economy is improving, the business and policy environment is definitely improving...but you can only go so far if the talent isn't available.

At the federal level, the Trump administration has taken concrete steps forward, including bringing people together from across agencies and departments to promote apprenticeships.

I was honored to be named to the President's Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion, along with Secretary of Labor Acosta, Secretary of Education DeVos, Secretary of Labor Ross and others.

That's just one example, of course. And we know that the Labor Secretary in particular is very focused on rethinking conventional wisdom about training and education so that we can have the best-equipped labor force in the world.

And, as is the case here in Ohio, state leaders and local officials have also stepped up to do their part.

As business leaders, however, we are in no position to sit back and say this is "someone else's" problem.

We could blame the education system. We could blame politicians. We could blame outdated attitudes about manufacturing or career technical education.

But if America doesn't transform the workforce and talent pipeline, we will have to blame ourselves. No one knows the problem better than we do. So no one is better equipped to help offer solutions and be partners for progress.

At the NAM, we firmly believe we must be the solution. We are engaged on the policy front, whether that's working with the administration or urging the Senate to pass the Perkins Career Technology Education bill, which the House moved in June.

But through our 501(c)3 affiliate, the Manufacturing Institute, we're also driving new programming to inspire and share the manufacturing story with new communities and with people traditionally underrepresented in our workforces—women, young people and veterans, for example.

The Manufacturing Institute is the authority on the attraction, qualification, and development of world-class manufacturing talent.

And our Executive Director Carolyn Lee, who took on this new role over the summer, is here today.

If you don't know Carolyn, but you're passionate about manufacturing talent, then you need to connect with her—because we want to be partners with you. And Carolyn has already brought incredible drive and vision to the Institute as we advance its important work and rise to the new challenges we face.

Finally, through the Institute and through our Communications team, we're focused on changing the perception of modern manufacturing careers. Because that's another key ingredient.

Even if we have the best training programs in the world, we have to get people in the door. And that means opening their eyes to the possibilities of modern manufacturing.

Like so many of you, we do that through Manufacturing Day events. And our research shows that 84 percent of students who attend a Manufacturing Day event, who actually see modern manufacturing in action, are more likely to think positively about manufacturing. 64 percent are more likely to pursue a manufacturing career. Something as simple as a visit to a shop floor can make a world of difference.

Our research also shows that when parents hear about the promising, rewarding careers we provide, their opinions of manufacturing change.

Parents and teachers,...they just want to steer young people toward jobs that will offer them stability and security and a future, especially in a world that is changing so, so rapidly.

Young people are looking for something that's meaningful, challenging, cutting edge.

The good news? We can answer all these priorities and concerns in manufacturing.

The challenge for us though...is getting that message across. We all know that so many people hear "manufacturing" and still think of the past because they've never had a chance to see modern manufacturing...even though they use our products every single day of their lives.

We need to connect with parents and students where they are consuming information. So we, at the NAM and the Manufacturing Institute, stepped forward to lead—with a new full-scale campaign to rebrand manufacturing careers in America: "Creators Wanted."

The name of the campaign tells parents and kids what we all know—and they need to know: the demand is enormous and manufacturers are yearning for new talent.

We're just getting started, but parents and students can already go to the new site, CreatorsWanted.org, and see ads and postings on social media with stories from real people about the opportunities in the industry today and tomorrow.

We're excited not only about the high level of engagement we're seeing, but also about how iconic brands and leading small manufacturers continue to join this industry-wide effort.

And once parents and students see the innovative world that is today's manufacturing through this campaign, they can engage with us to find outlets to nurture their interest and learn the skills they need.

The bottom line, though, is this: building this workforce is about far more than improving our businesses. Today in America, despite the progress we've made, there are communities in need of hope, families in need of new jobs and better jobs.

Some just want to move up the economic ladder. Others...they need a lifeline out of hopelessness and despair.

We can provide that hope. We can provide that lifeline. Manufacturing has the jobs; we have the promising future. We can be the solution.

But first, we have to make it possible to meet people where they are...young or old, regardless of background or identity.... And by offering them education and opportunities for lifelong learning, we can help them lift themselves up.

That's what this is really about—and why your work and your presence here today matter. This is more than good business. It's giving back to our communities and to our country.

Now, I also want to take some time this afternoon to offer a perspective from the nation's capital on the larger manufacturing agenda.

And in Washington, DC, this is manufacturing's moment. I have never seen our leaders and the public so focused on our industry.

The Trump administration, working with Congress, has tackled regulations, unleashed energy development, protected intellectual property, and given manufacturers more determination to invest in the future.

But, let me be clear: That's not enough. Now, we must secure that biggest, boldest reform that will boost manufacturing and raise standards of living across the country.

It's time for tax reform that will lift everyone up and leave no one behind.

And frankly, if we're going to keep building a growing American manufacturing workforce,...tax reform is an essential ingredient...because it means more jobs, better jobs, and the chance to bring greater job security for America's manufacturing workers.

At our fall NAM Board Meeting, President Trump shared his vision for tax reform, a plan he said—and I agree with this—would be “rocket fuel” for the American economy.

He's right. When comprehensive business tax reform is enacted, the manufacturers in our outlook survey are clear: there will be more investment, more jobs and more wealth in America...for all Americans.

Listen to these incredible numbers: Almost 65% say they would increase investment in equipment and other capital. 64% say they would expand their businesses. 57% say they would hire more workers. And 52% report they would increase wages and benefits.

Tax reform has the power to transform our industry, propel us into the future, and lift us to new heights.

That's why it's manufacturers' number one priority.

It's been more than three decades since America modernized our tax code under President Ronald Reagan. And since then, other countries have caught on. They've lowered their rates, simplified their tax codes, and made it attractive to do business overseas.

The current tax code lets other countries win. And it is our workers, American manufacturing workers, who are losing out.

We need a tax code that works for manufacturers—that lowers rates for companies of all sizes, large and small, and one that stops punishing U.S. companies when they reinvest overseas earnings back into the United States. American-based companies are double-taxed on overseas earnings brought back home while foreign-based companies are not.

We need to fix this by moving to a territorial tax system like the rest of the world, so more companies can invest in American workers and facilities without paying a steep price for doing so.

Congress has cleared the procedural hurdles on tax reform, and now we're getting the details of the actual legislation, which is its own process. We're working through that; it's important. And we have to keep our eye on the ball to secure reform that boosts the economy and spurs job creation.

So the main message I want to share with you is this: success is not guaranteed.

Almost immediately, we saw knee-jerk reactions to the earlier tax framework. It's going to be up to you, all of us, associations, business leaders, individuals—to stand firm and to tell the story of what tax reform really means...not what opponents pretend it represents.

As I said, tax reform is a workforce issue. We understand that. We can't let our elected leaders forget that.

We shouldn't let anyone get away with defending the status quo. Because the current system makes it harder for workers to get ahead and to grow their paychecks. It makes it harder for businesses to expand their operations here—and give back to local communities.

Supporting the status quo is settling for mediocrity. But we're Americans. We're manufacturers. We don't settle. We set high expectations, and then we exceed them. We don't accept being in the middle of the pack or falling behind. We want to keep leading the world.

And to do that, tax reform is an absolute necessity.

We've asked our members at the NAM to speak out, to share what tax reform means for their own companies. These men and women are thinking big. One fourth-generation firm said it would mean a 40 percent increase in investment in equipment and facilities. The leader of another small family firm said she'd grow her workforce at least 10 percent.

A steel wire manufacturer told us he's already investing millions in new equipment just from the promise of tax reform.

This is real. And the American people need to know it's real before the negative, timid voices dominate the conversation.

It's no secret Americans are frustrated with many of their elected leaders. They don't believe Washington can get big things done.

Well, here is the perfect way to change their minds. Give families a break. Give workers a raise. Give manufacturers a shot in the arm—and get tax reform done and get it done right.

And I hope, I urge you, to do everything you can to make the case for change and for progress. Success depends on all of us. And to stay connected with us at the NAM, you can text, right now, "ActOnTax" to 52886. One word..."ActOnTax" to 52886.

Of course, there are many other issues essential to manufacturers' competitiveness, including a fully functioning Export-Import Bank, infrastructure investment, immigration reform and expanded trade, in addition to regulatory reform and workforce development. All of it matters. All of it is essential to improving the lives of Americans and growing manufacturing in the United States.

And embedded in each of these issues is a question of what we stand for as a country. What do we value? Who are we? I have long believed—and we live this every day at the NAM—that our larger mission is to protect, promote and advance four principles, four pillars, that make America an exceptional nation.

I've shared these with some of you before...

The first is free enterprise: The economic system that unleashes innovation, creates opportunity and lifts humankind out of poverty more than any other economic system has in the history of the world.

The second is competitiveness: Our ability, when untethered from government overreach to prosper and win in a global economy.

The third, individual liberty: The unique freedoms enshrined in our Constitution and Bill of Rights that enable us to live and succeed as we were made by our Creator.

And the fourth, equal opportunity: Our shared belief that we all have the ability to contribute to the betterment of our families, our companies, our communities and our country.

The policies we advocate, everything we fight for, is about supporting these principles. And the business community embraces that role and responsibility.

We owe it to our country—to bring people together and restore hope for those who feel left behind.

Our mission is always to do what is best for America, what strengthens our people and our leadership. That's what drives us at the NAM.

It's not about politics or personality or process. It's about producing results for the long-term strength of our economy and our workers, about advancing our values and remaining a beacon of strength and hope for the world.

Together, we have the chance to accomplish something consequential for our fellow Americans—and for the next generation.

Throughout history, manufacturers have made America. Today, we're ready to build our future with a workforce that has the skill and know-how to get it done.

Thank you so much.