

**Remarks Prepared for Delivery
Jay Timmons, President and CEO
National Association of Manufacturers
2017 STEP Ahead Awards
Washington, DC
April 20, 2017**

Thank you, Heidi [Alderman].

Thank you to everyone—from the Institute staff to our outstanding sponsors—who make this celebration possible.

And, of course, the biggest thanks goes to our honorees this evening: the inspirational women who have stepped up as leaders in our industry—to build the future of manufacturing and our country.

For someone who believes passionately in the promise and potential of manufacturing, this event, The STEP Ahead Awards, is one of my favorite days of the year.

We have a great time, but we also send an important message:

We celebrate the accomplishments of role models.

We look toward the future and the potential we can unlock.

And we dedicate ourselves to supporting our country and the next generation.

Thank you for being a part of this essential mission.

You've come to Washington, D.C. at an exciting and interesting time.

Now, I happen to think any day is a good day to be a manufacturer. But this moment in our nation's history is, without a doubt, something unique.

Manufacturing—our industry, our work—has captured the imagination of people across this country and of leaders right here in Washington, D.C.

Manufacturing is increasing output and bringing us revolutionary technologies. We are charting new frontiers and supporting new jobs.

Today, manufacturers support more than 18 million American jobs. And across this country, companies are announcing their plans to make new investments in American factories and American workers.

We're making great new strides in sustainability and energy efficiency. And the growth of technologies like 3-D printing help us deliver greater value to our customers through just-in-time manufacturing.

But none of this happens in isolation. It takes commitment and perseverance. And it takes an adherence to four foundational principles...core principles which have been responsible for creating and maintaining an exceptional America. The first of these principles is:

Free enterprise: The economic system that unleashes innovation, creates opportunity, and positively transforms the human condition more than any other economic system has in the history of the world.

The second is...

Competitiveness: Our ability, when untethered from the chains of government excess to prosper and win in a global economy.

The third is....

Individual liberty: Those 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 fundamental principle is:

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.

Free enterprise. Competitiveness. Individual liberty. Equal opportunity. You live these four principles each and every day, and because of you and millions of others, America is, and will remain, a beacon for the world. And it is the power of a strong manufacturing sector that will drive our economy forward and enable our country to continue to lead.

This, ladies and gentlemen, this is our time. Manufacturing animated the presidential race.

The president of the United States has made manufacturing in the United States his signature issue, and he is listening to us for our ideas on priority issues like business tax reform, regulatory reform, infrastructure investment and workforce development.

And it is that challenge—the challenge of creating our 21st-century modern workforce—that brings us together for this event.

Even before we account for jobs that would be created from the policy reforms we're seeking, manufacturers will have 3.5 million jobs to fill over the next decade...but 2 million of them will remain empty...unless we do something now.

Together, we must encourage the next generation to see what modern manufacturing is all about. And we must expand access to education, training and credentialing—especially in the STEM fields—which students will need to succeed as dreamers, makers and doers.

We must make clear that manufacturers' doors are wide open to women of all backgrounds and capabilities.

I watched my mother overcome barriers decades ago, and now, being the father of two girls—C.J. and Ellie, who are here this evening—has further deepened my commitment to ensuring that all of our children are given every chance to shape their tomorrows.

Let me read to you what C.J., who is 7 years old and in the 1st grade wrote recently: "If someone says you can't be someone, they're wrong. You can be anything you want. Believe in yourself!"

That's what we believe at the NAM. That's our mission. And you are part of that mission, as are the hundreds of honorees we have recognized through the years and who are making a decidedly positive impact across the country as you—and they—inspire others.

On this fifth anniversary of STEP Ahead, we decided it was important to measure that impact. Working with Deloitte and APICS, we did some survey work.

A copy of the report is at your seat, but the takeaway is pretty clear: this event makes a difference. You make a difference.

Honorees say STEP Ahead recognition has helped their careers, and 88% of those surveyed say it has increased their level of engagement in developing others.

88% of past honorees have engaged with individuals to raise the visibility of the industry, and 92% have engaged in efforts in the development of women.

And here's my favorite number: Over the last 5 years, STEP Ahead Award winners have impacted more than 300,000 individuals – from peers in the industry to school age children.

In other words, your predecessors are setting a high bar, but I have no doubt that your efforts going forward will be even more impactful and influential. The torch is now in your hands to light the path for others.

You see, I believe manufacturing can be more than an industry. It can be a movement. We can be a powerful force for good—in America and around the world.

Sure, there are challenges before us, but there are also incredible, once-in-a-lifetime opportunities.

And if we look beyond ourselves, there is no limit to what we can accomplish.

Thank you for doing your part, raising your voice and stepping up to make an impact.

Congratulations—and have an awesome time this evening.

Thank you so much. And I'd be happy to take questions.