



MANUFACTURING SUMMIT

U.S. Senate Race Has Opposing Trade Views

The 2004 U.S. Senate race in North Carolina will pit a free trade advocate against a proponent of accountability in pacts that would affect manufacturing.

The N.C. Manufacturing Executives Summit in Greensboro toward the close of 2003 spotlighted the differences between Richard Burr and Erskine Bowles. Both are Washington insiders. But they bring totally different approaches to preserving manufacturing in America.

Bowles, former White House Chief of Staff for President Bill Clinton, would require the President to produce a "trade impact statement" before any formal agreement is consummated.

Bowles says the U.S. must require countries to cease counterfeiting and dumping.

He would push for action that would prohibit the President from negotiating any new treaties until Congress is assured that all agreements are being enforced. The President should be given all the resources to enforce pacts.

From Burr's vantage point, "the genie is out of the bottle and you can't put it back." Translation: no more protection for manufacturers, including textiles. You have to find a way to compete with goods coming from China or anywhere else regardless of costs.

Burr, the GOP congressman from North Carolina's 5th District, insisted that all parties should live up to same conditions as U.S. producers. And he added "the time for finger-pointing has passed ...the answer is not to shut our borders..."

Bowles was specific in charting a course of action.

"We must insist that China let its currency float," an issue that has resulted in a U.S. House bill that would put a 40 percent tariff on goods until China complies. Burr predicted the bill would never pass the House.

"Enforce the existing trade agreements with China," Bowles urged and halt the \$4 billion a year in transshipping through Mexico.

Bowles called for additional safeguards in trade agreements involving textiles and he said they must be implemented when disruptions and violations occur. The hosiery industry's efforts to get a call on cotton socks from China were confronted with numerous detours from bureaucrats in the office of Assistant Deputy Secretary of Commerce Jim Leonard.

Bowles also called for more support for research and development for small and medium-sized businesses, including expansion of the Manufacturing Extension Partnerships (MEPs). The Bush administration has asked Congress to cut MEP appropriations to less than 40 percent of 2002-03 funding. If approved, the \$300,000 annual federal MEP appropriation to the Hosiery Technology Center will be severely cut.



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