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Bipartisan Bill Seeks To Address US Supply Chain Issues, Prevent Further Crises

by [Brian Bossetta](#)

Lawmakers have introduced legislation that would establish a national database to help manufacturers expedite the supply chain and avoid further disruptions.

As many of the nation's supplies sit in cargo containers offshore and on docks, a bipartisan group of US lawmakers has introduced [legislation](#) aimed at preventing future logjams and keeping the flow of goods moving.

The National Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Supply Chain Database Act introduced on 1 December by Sens. Bob Menendez, D-NJ, and Marsha Blackburn, R-TN, and Reps. Norma Torres, D-CA, and Chuck Fleischman, R-TN, would create a national database to streamline the country's supply chain.

The lawmakers are taking two tracks to get the bill onto President Biden's desk – they've attached it as an [amendment](#) to the pending National Defense Authorization Act, as well as standalone legislation.

The database the legislation creates seeks to mitigate supply chain disruption by providing manufacturers with vital information they need on products essential to the nation's health and security, including medical devices and supplies.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a wake-up call to how vulnerable America's supply chain is, especially in times of crisis. The lawmakers said that as the pandemic took hold of the country in early 2020, states became painfully aware of just how dependent state manufacturers were on resources – particularly personal protective equipment – from other states or overseas.

“The National Supply Chain Database bill will allow manufacturers to better understand their supply chains.” – Carrie Hines

“The COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep vulnerabilities in our own national supply chains that we are still dealing with as a country and that make us susceptible during moments of crisis,” Sen. Menendez said. “Future pandemics, natural disasters, cyberattacks, raw material shortages, and even trade disputes could cripple our supply chains right when we need to engage them most in order to deliver critical goods to the American public.”

The legislation would close the gap in available information about the nation’s supply chain by leveraging the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) of the National Institute Standards and Technology (NIST) to create the National MEP Supply Chain Database, which would then be connected to MEP centers across the US.

MEP is a public-private partnership that provides small- and medium-sized manufacturers with technology-based services, which can help these firms grow. Located in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, the MEP National Network helped manufacturers pull in \$13bn in sales in fiscal 2020 while creating 105,748 US manufacturing jobs, NIST data show.

The legislation is supported by the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program and the American Small Manufacturers Coalition.

“The National Supply Chain Database bill will allow manufacturers to better understand their supply chains to potentially mitigate the risks they are experiencing now due to the pandemic,” said Carrie Hines, CEO of the American Small Manufacturers Coalition.

The bottleneck of supplies at US ports has also hurt businesses and consumers with rising prices for goods, including gas.

Rep. Torres said addressing the nation’s immediate supply chain issues as well as future ones will also help the economy. “The database will greatly help the day-to-day operations for American manufacturers by better connecting them with opportunities and needs, which means more jobs and better pay in our communities,” she said.