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The Small Business Administration, through its vigorous lending and loan guaranty efforts, has improved access to capital so that small manufacturing firms and other small businesses can modernize, expand, and invest in worker training.

The Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) of the Department of Commerce, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year, gives small manufacturers a solid foundation on which to build innovative ideas and products. With a network of more than 70 nonprofit centers, the MEP serves small manufacturers in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, providing access to the newest technology, manufacturing processes, and business practices. The MEP's local centers offer personalized guidance to manufacturers on issues ranging from business to technology solutions. And because these centers are linked together through the Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology, even the smallest manufacturing firms can enjoy instant access to the most advanced national resources.

Most important, we are continuing to invest in education and training to give America's working men and women the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the jobs of the 21st century. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which I was pleased to sign into law last year, provides skill grants directly to workers so they can choose the kind of training they want and where they want to obtain it.

As we observe Small Manufacturing Week, let us pay tribute to America's more than 385,000 small manufacturing firms whose commitment to hard work and excellence has helped set our country on a steady course for continued growth and prosperity.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 19 through September 25, 1999, as Small Manufacturing Week, 1999. I invite all Americans to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs that recognize the achievements of our Nation's small manufacturers.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., August 27, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 26, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on August 30.

Proclamation 7218—America Goes Back to School, 1999

August 27, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Education has always been at the heart of opportunity in America. It opens doors for our young people, gives them the tools they need to succeed, and instills in them a sense of responsibility as they strive to make the most of their lives. However, while the importance of education is unchanging, the challenges facing America's schools and students are not. There are now more children, from more diverse backgrounds, in our public schools than at any time in our country's history. We must ensure that their education gives them the knowledge and skills they need to help our Nation thrive in the new century

America's current prosperity offers us an unprecedented opportunity to invest in our children's education. I am proud that we have begun that task by opening the doors of college to all our young people with tax credits and more affordable student loans, more Pell grants and work-study jobs, education IRAs, and the new HOPE Scholarship tax cut that more than 5 million Americans will have received by the end of this year. I have also announced $43 million in grants to help States and communities to recruit talented people into teaching jobs and improve the quality of teaching nationwide.