

This month, [Heather Macholan](#) of Howells, Nebraska, was awarded a "Women in Manufacturing STEP award" for her excellence in science, technology, engineering, and production. I had the pleasure of congratulating her for her hard work and ingenuity when she visited me in Washington. We talked about manufacturing's importance in providing good paying jobs that can support families and its role in strengthening and diversifying local economies.

During our meeting, I learned of a new word: "reshoring." Recall several years ago when the word "outsourcing" first appeared. Companies were shifting manufacturing and other services overseas. The alarming trend in manufacturing seemed overwhelming as more and more industrial products lost their American branding. I am sure you have also had the experience of speaking to a customer service center that seems really far away. "Reshoring" is the new term that describes the trend of jobs coming back to America. It is an encouraging pattern and a great opportunity to accelerate our economic recovery.

Manufacturing has historically been one of America's – and Nebraska's – economic bright spots. Recently, it's experienced new growth. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Nebraska has added over 3,000 manufacturing jobs in the past three years. Many of these manufacturing jobs are found in Nebraska's First Congressional District, in what I like to call Nebraska's "manufacturing triangle." The communities of Columbus, Norfolk, and Fremont all boast a strong industrial base rooted in specialized manufacturing.

A number of factors contribute to "reshoring." Wage rates have leveled somewhat between the U.S. and other nations, while the cost of transporting raw materials and finished products has increased. Energy costs have dropped domestically, due to increased American energy production and the application of new practices and technology that increase energy efficiency. Growth is also a result of the dedicated focus of people and non-profit organizations working together to promote new manufacturing jobs. In Nebraska, we have a chapter of the Dream!t Dolt Initiative, which encourages young people to seek careers in manufacturing. You can learn more about this effort [here](#) .

In Washington, many are calling for a renewed push to increase manufacturing jobs in the United States. For its part, the federal government can help by continuing to encourage American energy independence (through new forms of responsible energy generation and conservation), recreating a reasonable regulatory environment, and implementing the right type of tax reform that encourages entrepreneurship and small business.

It will be innovative manufacturers like Heather, though, who will help ensure that "reshoring" is not just a trend, but an important component of America's economic recovery. If we are serious about rebuilding the "Made in America" label, the innovation and vision of manufacturing leaders and small business entrepreneurs in Nebraska offers the nation a solid model of how to move forward.