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Matsui: Don't Let the World Pass Us By on Green Technology Programs

By Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui, California's 5th Congressional District

Our nation is running a trade deficit in green technologies ranging in the billions, and the U.S. clean tech industry is lagging behind many of its competitors in exports, including Germany and China. This is simply unacceptable.

So we have a choice to make. We can choose to stand still and let the rest of the world pass us by, or we can embark on an aggressive and sustained strategy to expand clean energy markets for domestic manufacturing and increase U.S. exports in this field. We must not become a nation dependent on foreign clean energy products. We must be the nation that leads the world in manufacturing and exporting clean energy technologies. And we must lead our country out of this recession.

That is why I introduced H.R. 5156, the Clean Energy Technology Manufacturing and Export Assistance Act, which would boost the competitiveness of the American-made clean technology industry in both domestic and international markets. Doing so will have tremendous benefits for our national economy but will also help bolster those with the highest potential for job growth in America: our small and medium-sized businesses.

H.R. 5156 would create a Clean Energy Technology Manufacturing and Export Assistance Fund to support the development, implementation and sustainability of a National Clean Energy Technology Export Strategy, as well as assist U.S. clean tech firms with export assistance by finding and navigating foreign markets to export their goods and services abroad.

Specifically, the bill would require the Department of Commerce, in coordination with relevant

agencies, to implement, develop and sustain a National Clean Energy Technology Export Strategy to provide U.S. clean tech firms with export assistance in finding and navigating foreign markets to sell their goods and services to new customers.

My legislation would also help strengthen America's domestic clean tech manufacturing industry. Unlike large companies, small and medium-sized firms simply do not have the resources or expertise to find and navigate foreign markets. And they are seeking assistance. In fact, according to the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee, more than 30 percent of nonexporting small and medium-sized companies would export if they had more access to market information, export opportunities and the export process.

Communities like my home district of Sacramento, Calif., are well-positioned to lead our country in the manufacturing of clean energy technologies, with more than 110 small and medium-sized clean energy companies already located in the region. Many of these companies have validated their clean energy technologies and are now looking to expand their businesses by exporting their goods and services to new foreign markets, but they lack the resources to do so.

The president has laid out an ambitious goal to double U.S. exports over the next five years. But the creation of a Clean Energy Technology Manufacturing and Export Assistance Fund is an important component in meeting this goal.

This program can help drive U.S. manufacturing leadership in the low-carbon economy of the future by facilitating innovative U.S. firms' access to what will be a significant global market for clean energy. And this legislation will ensure clean energy exports are at the forefront of our national export strategy.

Moreover, the legislation will also enhance our standing in the race to be the global leader in clean energy.

The BP oil spill only underscores the need for leadership in the clean energy market, and this bill will send a strong message that America is serious about being the leader in producing and exporting these technologies. Clean energy technology will be a critical component of tomorrow's economy, with the potential to create thousands of jobs and provide domestic energy without harming the environment.

Providing entrepreneurs with the tools that they need to sell their products and create new jobs will have serious multiplier effects in our communities and local economies. It will help put families back to work and provide our nation a much-needed boost in manufacturing that has severely declined in the last several decades.

Investing in American-made clean technology is a path to economic recovery, renewed financial stability and measurable job growth. And it will help us meet our goals of decreased carbon emissions and higher air and water quality — all at the same time.

H.R. 5156 recently passed unanimously out of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection and passed just last week with broad support out of the full House Energy and Commerce Committee. And I appreciate the support for this legislation from subpanel Chairman Bobby Rush (D-Ill.), Energy and Commerce Chairman Emeritus John Dingell (D-Mich.) and Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.), among others.

The Clean Energy Technology Manufacturing and Export Assistance Act is expected to come to the floor this week. When it does, my colleagues will have the opportunity to join me in making “Made in America” a reality once again.