

## **Menendez Announces Legislation to Encourage, Support, Reward Creation of Good, Sustainable Jobs**

‘America Star’ recognizes American businesses who do right by their employees

**GARWOOD, N.J.** – U.S. Senator Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) today unveiled new legislation designed to stimulate the growth of good, sustainable jobs by highlighting businesses that both make American-made products and support American workers and incentivizing others to follow their lead. The Senator toured New Jersey’s Pen Company of America (PCA), where he was joined by local elected officials, business owners and advocates at a press conference to announce his plans to introduce the America Star Act.

“The success of American business and the wellbeing of our workers are not mutually exclusive. They should, and often do, go hand-in-hand,” **said Sen. Menendez.** “This legislation is about giving consumers more information so that they can give back to the companies that do right by all of us. We need to identify and recognize companies that are investing in America with responsible practices. Once we do, I believe consumers will respond and we will see other companies following their lead in supporting their workers, making products here in America, and growing and strengthening our middle class.”

America Star is modeled after the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Energy Star program, which gives consumers information about what products are energy efficient and creates market incentive for companies to make energy efficient product. Just as Energy Star has successfully moved the country towards producing and purchasing more energy efficient products, America Star is designed to lift standards for the American worker.

Specifically, the America Star Act focuses on recognizing companies that demonstrate outstanding support of American workers based on their hiring and worker support practices. It would create a program within the Department of Labor (DOL) to empower consumers to make more informed decisions about where to bring their business, while increasing the market incentive for other companies to implement better workforce support practices and improve the conditions and compensation for employees.



“More and more of the public understand that, not only can they choose between products, but they can also choose between companies,” **David Levine, co-founder and CEO of the American Sustainable Business Council said.** “We believe that businesses and the economy can and should be built on creating financial, as well as environment and social benefits. This includes ensuring that we are creating U.S. jobs by making our products here, providing fair wages and good workplace practices, and ensuring that we have an inclusive economy, ensuring that veterans, and all others that want to work can. We need innovative programs like America Star that recognize and lift up these responsible companies”



Founded by a U.S. Military veteran more than 50 years ago, PCA manufactures writing instruments, including Rotary Pen, in Garwood, N.J. and is now run by the third and fourth generations of the Shea family. In the 1970s, through a partnership with the National Industries for the Blind, Rotary Pen was instrumental in bringing writing instruments to US government employees. This collaboration continues to provide hundreds of jobs to blind and handicapped workers. When most other pen manufacturers moved offshore during the 1990s and early 2000s, PCA's products continue to be 'Made in America.'

"Having a standard to identify companies who strongly support the American workforce will benefit the consumer, U.S. manufacturers and the economy as a whole," **said PCA's Colleen Shea.** "Dating back to 1928, the Shea family has made it a priority to remain 'Made in the U.S.A.' by manufacturing its line of writing instruments in New Jersey when so many other manufacturers moved offshore. This legislation will assist in PCA's goal to continue domestic manufacturing for generations to come."

Under this legislation, recipient companies will be able to use their America Star certification as a badge of honor for marketing purposes; ultimately influencing purchasing decisions by promoting their accreditation as an exemplary company for American workers and the American economy.

"I strongly support the America Star act and the emphasis that is being placed on recognizing companies that put forth an honest effort to hire veterans," **said Jack Fanous, executive director and founder of the G.I. Go Fund.** "We need companies that aren't just friendly, but are serious about hiring veterans: companies that are willing to train veterans for work, companies that are willing to recognize the enormous skills and real life experience our veterans bring back to the workforce, and companies that create a comfortable work environment for veterans. I applaud Senator Menendez for again being ahead of the curve and providing America with common sense ideas that help our people, our businesses, our Veterans, and our Country!"

Among the public officials joining Sen. Menendez for today's announcement were Union County Sherriff Joseph Cryan and Union County Freeholder Vice-Chair Bruce Bergen.

