

A program credited for the retention and creation of at least 6,000 *Florida* jobs during the last 4.5 years could be all but shut down due to the Bush administration's proposed fiscal 2009 budget.

At issue is funding for the *Manufacturing Extension Partnership* program, which helps small and midsize manufacturers boost productivity through such things as training workers in *lean manufacturing* processes.

For years, the Bush administration has proposed ever-dwindling amounts of money for the program.

However, Congress repeatedly has restored much of what the president wanted to cut because the program works. In fact, it created or retained more than 52,000 jobs nationally in 2006.

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