ASSURING THE FUTURE SUPPLY OF DEFENSE ELECTRONICS REQUIRES SUPPORT OF THE PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARD EXECUTIVE AGENT

Printed circuit boards (PCBs) are the backbone of all electronics, which are a vital component of all national defense, economic, environmental, energy and health care management solutions. Intense global competition has resulted in a fifty percent reduction in the number of United States PCB companies and associated high-quality U.S. jobs.

Few U.S. companies remain that are able to produce highly sophisticated and reliable PCBs for defense needs. Future U.S. national security is at risk if the military cannot domestically obtain leading-edge electronics for defense systems.

The Department of Defense (DoD) PCB Executive Agent was established by Congress to facilitate the U.S. electronic interconnect industry’s ability to meet DoD PCB requirements, uphold national security, and maintain leading-edge technology capabilities within the U.S. PCB industry.

THE SUPPLY OF MILITARY ELECTRONICS AND NATIONAL SECURITY IS INCREASINGLY AT RISK

The U.S. is heading toward an undesirable situation in which the U.S. electronics industry may not be capable of supporting DoD needs. DoD’s substantial increased use of commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) electronics has resulted in a shift from DoD’s support of domestic defense electronics suppliers to dependence on the global consumer market. This has led to a reduction in the number U.S. PCB manufacturers able to meet future DoD leading-edge technology PCB needs.

The affect of these trends leave DoD susceptible to counterfeit parts, unreliable components, and potential for a lack of technological expertise to meet future DoD requirements.

If measures are not taken to address the U.S. PCB industry’s ability to meet future DoD needs, the DoD may soon be forced to rely solely on overseas manufacturing for sensitive high technology military electronics.

Recognizing the critical nature of the situation, Congress mandated in the FY 2009 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 110-417) that the DoD create a PCB Executive Agent to develop a PCB roadmap, or strategic plan, to ensure that the DoD has access to the manufacturing capabilities and the technical expertise necessary to meet future military requirements.

Congress also mandated that the Executive Agent address the PCB supply chain to the DoD and develop trustworthiness requirements for PCBs used in defense systems. Implementation of the Executive Agent program is necessary to ensure that the U.S. PCB industry is capable of supporting future DoD electronics requirements.

STATUS OF PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARD EXECUTIVE AGENT PROGRAM

Although directed by Congress to appoint an PCB Executive Agent by January 2009, the Department of the Navy was not designated the Executive Agent until June 2009 and DoD has yet to begin funding and operating this program. Without funding, the Executive Agent program cannot begin to address future national defense readiness by preventing the erosion of the North American PCB industry’s ability to support DoD electronics requirements.

URGE THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO FUND THE PCB EXECUTIVE AGENT

Congress must ensure that the PCB Executive Agent program is funded, operational, and carrying out the mandates specified by Congress. Congress has recognized the potential consequences of the continuing reduction of U.S. PCB defense specific manufacturing and technological capabilities by mandating the creation of a PCB Executive Agent in P.L. 110-417. Congress must now ensure that the Executive Agent receives financial support and carries out its mission.

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