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March 5, 2003

The Honorable Olympia Snowe  
Chairman, Small Business Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madame Chairman:

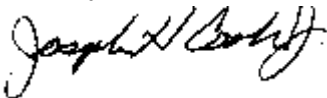
Thank you for introducing S. 545, the Small Business Health Fairness Act. Access to affordable health insurance is a major problem for many of the 26 million uninsured Americans who live in families supported by the self-employed or small business employees. Professional societies and trade associations have tried to fill that void by offering health insurance plans to their members. Unfortunately, the myriad of state regulations and mandatory coverage requirements make it very difficult, expensive and often impossible to offer coverage in all 50 states.

ASME International offers several different types of health insurance to its members, including the Comprehensive Major Medical (CMM) plan. Unfortunately, our administrator/broker cannot obtain affordable coverage in nine states due to the high cost of their mandates or required coverage. In total, nearly 13,000 ASME members have no access to our CMM plan (see attached state breakout).

Your bill will bring AHPs under the ERISA guidelines, thereby increasing the possibility of nationwide affordable coverage to all association and professional society members. This is particularly necessary during economic downturns when many engineering professionals are laid off and turn to self-employment.

The Small Business Health Fairness Act will allow ASME, and other bona fide professional societies and trade associations, to offer greater access and choice in health care options to their members. Thank you for your leadership in helping associations offer affordable health insurance to millions of American families by introducing S.545.

Sincerely,



Joseph H. Cook, Jr.  
Vice President, Member Interests and Development

*The American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME International) is a non-profit technical and educational organization with 125,000 members worldwide. This statement reflects the position of the Board on Member Interests and Development of the Council on Member Affairs, ASME International, and does not necessarily reflect the position of the Society as a whole.*

**ASME's Comprehensive Major Medical Plan  
States Where Coverage Is Unavailable**

<b>STATE</b>	<b># OF ASME MEMBERS</b>	<b>% TOTAL MEMBERS</b>
NEW YORK	4317	5.48%
NEW JERSEY	3110	3.95%
MASSACHUSETTS	2806	3.56%
KENTUCKY	616	0.78%
IOWA	630	0.80%
NEW HAMPSHIRE	572	0.73%
IDAHO	380	0.48%
MAINE	322	0.41%
HAWAII	227	0.29%
TOTAL	12980	16.49%

Source: ASME International  
February 2003  
[www.asme.org](http://www.asme.org)