

For generations, manufacturing was the lifeblood of communities across Ohio and throughout the country.

It was heavily unionized and the jobs paid well – and it's not a coincidence that those things go together. Those jobs allowed generations of Americans to build a middle class life. Workers innovated on the shop floor, propelling our economy to new heights and allowing us to lead the world in developing new industries.

But Ohioans know all too well what happened. Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, we stopped making things in America.

Look at places like my hometown of Mansfield, Ohio – an industrial city of 50,000 halfway between Cleveland and Columbus.

Companies like Westinghouse, Tappan Stove, Ohio Brass, and General Motors closed down, one after another.

Go to any town in Ohio, and people can name a similar list – they now measure their local history in lost opportunities and lost jobs.

All over America, companies were moving production elsewhere, in the name of, quote, “efficiency” – “efficiency” being business school speak for “lower wages.”

Corporate America wanted cheaper labor, wherever they could find it. First, they went to anti-union, anti-worker, low-wage states, often in the South. Then, when even those wages weren't low enough, they moved overseas.

And when these companies moved out, they weren't replaced by new investment. The creative destruction the market fundamentalists like to talk about wasn't followed by any construction – creative or otherwise.

Corporate greed – aided by decades of underinvestment, bad trade policy – which these corporations lobbied for – and worse tax policy – which these special interests also lobbied for – all drove production overseas.

It left us reliant on other countries – too often, our economic competitors. It exposed us to supply shocks. And it gutted our middle class.

Ohioans and workers in historic industrial towns in all our states felt it first.

Now the whole country is feeling it in the form of higher prices, empty shelves, and months-long waits for products people need.

We need to make more things in America.

That's not going to happen on its own – not when the economy of the last four decades was built

on corporations hopping the globe in search of workers to exploit.

And not when countries like China steal our ideas, monetize them, and use them to compete – and often cheat – against American businesses and American workers.

We need a concerted, coordinated effort to invest in American industries. We need to reverse decades of bad policy, and instead invest in our greatest assets: American workers and American innovation.

Look at what's happening now in Bucyrus, Ohio.

There are few innovations more quintessentially American than the light bulb.

Every elementary schooler learns that Ohioan Thomas Edison invented the light bulb at his lab in Menlo Park, New Jersey. And Ohio became the center of light bulb manufacturing.

But we have seen plants close across Ohio in places like Ravenna and Warren.

We were told that these plants were old and dated – they made old-fashioned incandescent bulbs. Instead, Americans would make new, next-generation technology like LED bulbs.

That's not what's happened.

We just learned that two Ohio factories that were part of the LED lightbulb supply chain in Ohio – in Bucyrus and Logan – are closing their operations.

Today, 99 percent of LED lightbulb production comes out of China.

Think about that – 99 percent of production is in China.

And when you move the entire production overseas, you move the shop floor innovation right along with it. Again, corporate America underestimated the ingenuity of American workers – or they just didn't care.

Or let's look at the semiconductor shortage.

Americans developed the semiconductor. American research and development created these chips, and American companies did most of the manufacturing.

Yet over time, production – often fueled by incentives from foreign countries – moved overseas.

And look what happened: during the pandemic, companies across Ohio and the rest of the country shut down production lines and laid off workers because they couldn't get enough semiconductors.

Whether you are Ford Motor Company in Lima, Whirlpool in Clyde, or Navistar in Springfield – you need these chips.

In the semiconductor industry, we see the problem – and we see the solution.

At the end of January, I flew to Columbus to join Intel to announce the largest ever domestic investment in semiconductor manufacturing.

It's going to create 10,000 good-paying jobs. Union tradespeople are going to build the entire facility.

And it's all possible because we are on the verge of passing an historic investment in American innovation and manufacturing.

We need to pass bipartisan legislation that supports efforts like Intel's to build new production in the United States. Our bill invests in research, development, and manufacturing in communities throughout the country to enable us to compete for the jobs of the future.

That's going to build on the work we did with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which will create new jobs and allow us to move more goods, more quickly, shortening our supply chains.

That's how we build a more resilient economy that can withstand dynamic global events – whether it's a public health crisis, a geopolitical crisis, or a climate crisis.

We also need to invest in our workers and ensure that they reap the benefits of the economic growth they create – through good paying jobs and investment in training programs and affordable childcare. Taken together, these investments ensure that economic growth reaches the whole country.

We need to support local and regional efforts to drive innovation.

Today, I'm submitting a statement for the record from a coalition of businesses, industry associations, and non-profits in Northeast Ohio on how supply chain resilience affects Ohio's economy.

I ask unanimous consent that the coalition's letter be submitted for the record.

I'm working closely with them to support their application for a federal challenge grant that would help turn the region into a national hub for advanced manufacturing innovation.

It's the kind of effort we need in communities all over the country.

We can lower prices and speed up supply chains. We can better compete with China. And we can create jobs and economic growth in places that corporate America left for dead decades ago.

I am excited to hear from our witnesses today about how we can make smart investments that

will spur innovation and job creation throughout the country.

Today, we're hearing from experts on the unique nature of supply shocks triggered by the pandemic – like in the semiconductor industry – and how we can prevent them in the future. We'll talk about how we can best support American workers and innovators, and about investments in domestic manufacturing will position us to lead the world.

It's time to make things in America again. Ohio has buried the term "Rust Belt." It's time for our whole country to bury it.