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**Written Testimony of Bill Zoeller  
CEO and Great-Grandson of Founder, Zoeller Company  
Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship  
U.S. Senate  
Hearing on “America 250: Industrialization and the Rise of Small Manufacturers”**

**May 13, 2026**

Thank you, Chair Ernst, Ranking Member Markey, and members of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee for inviting me to testify today. My name is Bill Zoeller, CEO of Zoeller Company and proud great-grandson of August “Pop” Zoeller, founder of the company in 1939.

It is an honor to testify on behalf of Zoeller Company for this hearing celebrating America’s 250<sup>th</sup> birthday, the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Manufacturing has played a vital role in our nation’s history—and continues to do so, now and into the future.

Zoeller Company is one of the oldest family-owned water pump manufacturers in North America. Like startups of today, it was founded in the family basement in 1939. Over the past eight decades, Zoeller Company has established itself as a dependable leader in the wastewater and clearwater industries. Our pumps help keep homeowners safe and dry, removing sewage, stormwater, and wastewater from homes and commercial facilities. They provide clean water to our nation’s farmers and others in different rural communities. Headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky, we proudly excel with fourth-generation leadership and an expanding workforce. We have grown significantly since our founding, acquiring other companies to expand our product offerings, including Flint and Walling (F&W), which was founded in 1866 and is based in Kendallville, Indiana. We also operate Zoeller Custom Molding in Boonville Indiana, Wolf Pump in Abernathy, Texas, and Sencillo Systems in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

At Zoeller, we are proud to have the “Made in the USA” label on our Zoeller Pump Company mainline products and that over 90% of our products are Made in America using a majority of US domestic content. In 2012 when one of our suppliers moved to Mexico, we cut ties with them. By investing in our people we decided to manufacture those motors internally. This created 35 new jobs and we put “Made in the USA” back on several products. Today, F&W is the lone manufacturer of 4” DC motors in the USA. Additionally, the well pumps manufactured in Kendallville IN, proudly state “Made in the USA with a majority of US



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domestic content” on them. Both of these labels give our customers the trust and confidence of knowing exactly where their products come from.

Zoeller is also proud to employ the American worker. We treat everyone as part of the Zoeller family, investing in their well-being with competitive benefits and a culture where people feel valued. That same sense of care extends beyond our walls. We stay deeply involved in the communities where we serve. Our employees are proud partners, volunteering their time and supporting charitable efforts that make a real difference. We are particularly proud of the fact that Zoeller annually invests more than \$1M throughout our communities through different charitable ventures.

### **Zoeller and America’s Manufacturing History**

We are proud to be part of America’s rich history of manufacturing. At each chapter since independence was declared, manufacturers have answered the call. Blacksmiths and shipbuilders armed the American revolution. Manufacturers built the tools that enabled our expansion to the west. We revolutionized transportation around the world with the assembly lines that made the automobile affordable. From the factories that became the Arsenal of Democracy, to the network of innovation and engineering across America that brought us to the moon in the Cold War, to the vaccines and healthcare supplies that ended the pandemic—manufacturers have always been there to help move this country forward.

The same year my great-grandfather started our family business, Nazi Germany invaded Poland, beginning the Axis powers’ attempt at global domination. As America’s enemies advanced across the world, manufacturers in America stepped up and built the Arsenal of Democracy that would ensure their defeat. Between 1939 and 1944, industrial production in the United States *doubled*. Zoeller Company production efforts expanded to include military-related equipment such as pumps, tracer shells, and aircraft components. For example, Flint & Walling’s contributions earned national recognition, including the Navy “E” Award for Excellence and the company’s products were used across multiple theaters of war, from Europe to North Africa. Many manufacturers across America did the same, and by 1944 the U.S. surpassed the industrial production of all the Axis powers combined. America armed our allies as our enemies swept across Europe, and when the time came for American troops to join Allied forces in taking back France, American manufacturers ensured that they would do so with what would be the greatest arsenal in human history to support their advance. Aircraft production increased 45-fold. The U.S. Navy increased its fleet by nine-fold. We built four tanks in the time it took the Germans to build one. Manufacturers were relentless in building an industrial base for victory, and we did exactly that.



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The industrial dominance that followed World War II was soon met with a competitive global economy. As the world recovered from the war and as nations rose to join the industrialized world, America’s manufacturing preeminence was challenged. Zoeller had to fight off our own threat from Chinese manufacturers, as our products were being replicated and the U.S. market was swamped with counterfeit goods. Fortunately, securing a U.S. patent gave us the legal protection we needed to defend our products.

But Zoeller’s participation in America’s history goes back even further than World War II. The company acquired Flint and Walling, which was founded in 1866 in Kendallville, Indiana. They manufactured the Flint and Walling Windmill that powered groundwater pumps to provide drinking water for cattle and irrigation in the Midwest. These small steel windmills are still a staple of rural America today and helped make possible America’s expansion to the Pacific Ocean. As frontiersmen settled throughout the wilderness of the West, the Flint and Walling Windmill enabled not just their survival, but their ability to expand and grow.

Much has changed since Flint and Walling first made its windmill, or when Zoeller became a temporary defense manufacturer in World War II. The global economy is simply more competitive today than it has been in the past. The recent policy successes are helping us compete, and Congress should continue policy efforts to support manufacturing into the future. It is once again time for the United States to defend its position as the industrial powerhouse of the world, and we are grateful for Congress’s recent efforts to do exactly that.

### **The Policy Pivot to Manufacturing Dominance is Supporting Zoeller’s Success**

Policy investments from decisionmakers here in Washington, DC are impacting companies like Zoeller across the country—bolstering America’s manufacturing preeminence. Historic policies in recent years have powered job creation here at home and supported American competitiveness on the world stage. The U.S. is making progress along a policy trajectory that will support reindustrialization and American manufacturing dominance—and we must preserve the progress we’ve made while continuing that momentum.

### **The Working Families Tax Cuts Are Rocket Fuel for Manufacturing Investment**

One of the most significant recent policy changes to support manufacturing in America is the Working Families Tax Cuts Act. These historic tax reforms were a vital win for manufacturing in America, improving the tax code to support manufacturing investment.

#### *Corporate Tax Rate*

As a corporation, the 21% corporate tax rate established in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and preserved by the Working Families Tax Cuts has supported Zoeller’s success and growth in



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recent years. As we have continued to expand, invest, and hire, a competitive corporate tax rate has been critical to our success. Before 2017, we were operating under one of the highest corporate tax rates in the world, while our competitors in foreign countries faced much lower rates. We've been far better positioned to grow and compete thanks to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act instituting a 21% corporate rate—and the Working Families Tax Cuts preserving that globally competitive rate.

### *Immediate Expensing for Research, Capital Equipment, and Facilities*

For Zoeller, another crucial pro-growth, pro-investment benefit of the Working Families Tax Cuts is the law's focus on business expensing. The reforms restored our ability to fully and immediately expense the cost of both research and capital equipment purchases; the law also made it easier to expense interest on business loans, supporting our future investments that depend on debt financing. Additionally, the Working Families Tax Cuts Act created a new deduction for the construction or improvement of manufacturing production facilities—a critical new incentive that will drive manufacturing investment and job creation across the country.

By empowering manufacturers to immediately expense research, capital equipment, and manufacturing facilities, the after-tax costs of those investments are reduced, and manufacturers like Zoeller can make more of them as a result. Zoeller is continuing to invest in our growth, building a new facility in Louisville and ordering equipment to run the plant. As we continue to invest into the future, these tax provisions will make it easier and more cost-effective for us to make those investments.

We have seen a tremendous impact from the law's restoration of research expensing. Zoeller needs to offer cutting-edge products to stay competitive, and immediate research expensing supports our ability to do exactly that. We've come a long way from the pumps my great-grandfather built in 1939, and it is important that we continue to lead in innovation to deliver the highest quality pumps to our customers. Immediately deducting our research costs has a big impact on our ability to invest in R&D, and we are grateful that the Working Families Tax Cuts supports our ability to innovate with its restoration.

Manufacturers are capital-intensive, and investment in research and advanced manufacturing technologies are the lifeblood of manufacturing competitiveness. By creating a tax code that recognizes the importance of these investments for economic growth, manufacturers are better prepared than ever to compete and win.



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### *Estate Tax Relief*

Additionally, the tax law also allows me to plan long term for the company's continued legacy. Zoeller is a longstanding family business, and I am proud to be the fourth generation of the Zoeller family to own the company. Only 3% of family businesses in the U.S. are fourth generation. Many families have not been as fortunate as Zoeller, and one of the key obstacles to keeping family businesses in the family has historically been the Death Tax. Thankfully, the Working Families Tax Cuts provide relief to many small, family-owned manufacturers from the devastating impact of the estate tax.

In 2017, the TCJA doubled the estate tax exemption, protecting family-owned manufacturers from a potentially crippling tax burden following the death of a loved one. Without the Working Families Tax Cuts, the exemption would have been cut in half at the end of 2025. That would have meant that family-owned manufacturers would have been forced to liquidate assets, take on debt, limit operations, reduce employees, or close down entirely as a result of the tax. Instead, because the Working Families Tax Cuts preserved the higher exemption, family-owned manufacturers like Zoeller are better equipped to grow and pass down their family's legacy.

### *Pro-Growth Impacts*

Zoeller's employees also benefit directly from the Working Families Tax Cuts, especially because the law prevented a tax rate increase on families at all income levels. Additionally, the workers at Zoeller will benefit from No Tax on Overtime, the new deduction in the Working Families Tax Cuts for overtime income. Our employees who work overtime will be receiving a direct increase to their take-home pay as a result of this provision. Manufacturing workers work 6 more hours per week than the national average and increasing these workers take-home pay makes a manufacturing career even more attractive at a time when the industry is facing nearly 400,000 open jobs.

The benefits of the Working Families Tax Cuts for manufacturing in America also extend well beyond those provisions that directly impact Zoeller. Though Zoeller is a corporation, 96% of manufacturers are organized as pass-throughs, and these are overwhelmingly small businesses. The 20% deduction for pass-through businesses and the extension of the individual income tax rates has been another impactful piece of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act; because the Working Families Tax Cuts made the deduction and reduced rates permanent, small manufacturers have both the competitive tax policy the certainty they need to support their success.



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With the signing of the Working Families Tax Cuts on July 4, 2025, Congress and President Trump delivered a tax code that will empower manufacturers to build on the past and help continue to lead this country into the future. The pro-growth provisions included in the bill come together to create a tax code that aligns perfectly with the investments manufacturers need to make to stay competitive. Competitive tax rates, fairer treatment of family businesses, and immediate expensing for vital investments underpin the tax code's pivot towards manufacturing growth. With each of these vital provisions, the Working Families Tax Cuts further aligns our tax code with the legacy of our nation as one of builders and makers.

### **Other Recent Policies Have Built the Infrastructure for Manufacturing Growth**

Several other policy efforts deserve mention as crucial to America's manufacturing resurgence.

#### *Regulatory Rebalancing*

First, manufacturers strongly support President Trump's efforts to rebalance and modernize the federal regulatory environment. Our industry spends \$350 billion each year just to comply with federal regulations — capital that could be spent on expanding factories and production lines, hiring new workers, or raising wages. This cost falls disproportionately on smaller manufacturers, which spend more than \$50,000 per employee per year on regulatory compliance costs. At Zoeller, we worry that the costs could be greater if the regulations require us to undermine the quality and reliability of our product, creating long-term costs for both us and our customers. The administration's reforms to reduce the cost of federal regulations and ensure that rules are practical and workable are crucial to the growth of manufacturing in America.

#### *AI, Innovation, and Energy Security*

AI is increasingly integral to modern manufacturing. President Trump has put forward a strategy for AI development in the U.S. that supports the advancement of this critical technology, while advancing energy and critical minerals policies that support the buildout of the digital infrastructure needed for artificial intelligence. As a vital technology that will define much of the future economy, the U.S. must continue to lead in the development and deployment of artificial intelligence.

These investments build on the success of the CHIPS and Science Act, which was vital for reshoring the critical semiconductor supply chain. Bringing that capability home helps secure that supply chain in the U.S., which is important for both manufacturers making chips and those using chips in their products. As a company committed to sourcing our products



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domestically, we appreciated Congress's efforts to bring this critical manufacturing input to U.S. shores.

### *Infrastructure*

Manufacturers like Zoeller depend on robust American infrastructure to make and move products across the country. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act was a historic investment informed by years of advocacy from manufacturers and other key stakeholders to finally address our nation's longstanding infrastructure needs. This investment bolstered American supply chains by ensuring the efficient movement of manufacturing goods—ultimately supporting companies like Zoeller as we bring inputs to our facilities and as we deliver products to our customers across the country. With key IJIA provisions set to expire later this year, Congress now has the opportunity to preserve and build on these investments.

### **How Congress Can Continue the Momentum for Manufacturing Dominance**

The path to manufacturing dominance is already underway with a competitive tax code now in place. Now, Congress has the opportunity build on the successes of the Working Families Tax Cuts with additional investments that will drive manufacturing revitalization in America.

### *Regulatory Reforms*

As mentioned, President Trump's efforts to right-size federal regulations have been enormously important for manufacturers. At Zoeller, we are hopeful that the Department of Energy will take steps to protect manufacturers from the Biden Administration's Circulator Pump efficiency regulation, which was finalized in May 2024, with a compliance date of May 22, 2028.

Manufacturers, including producers and users of energy, are committed to reducing our energy intensity and producing more energy-efficient consumer products to help reduce energy demand, save money, and lower costs.

Unfortunately, under the previous administration, the Circulator Pump regulation was an instance of new energy efficiency regulations being issued that didn't take into account the full impact that they would have on small and medium-sized manufacturers, nor does it fully account for costs associated with a pump failure. If implemented, according to Zoeller's estimates, the new standard would threaten the reliability of the sump pump motor in order to only save customers \$2-3 per year on energy costs. In contrast, the damage that results from a higher efficiency, but lower reliability motor, is significantly more costly to consumers in that the damage of a flooded basement. There is a role for the Department of Energy to



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play in ensuring regulatory certainty and predictability for manufacturers. At the same time, the government also should ensure their rules are workable for companies like Zoeller before they impose them.

### *Commonsense Trade Policy*

As mentioned, Zoeller is in the process of expanding our footprint and procuring capital equipment to operate our new facility. As we do so, we remain committed to sourcing inputs domestically. However, much of the highly specialized machinery that we need to make more in America is not yet produced here. In our case, we are procuring equipment from Germany and Japan to machine cast iron components and to bring advanced manufacturing capabilities online—equipment that will be installed on our shop floors here in America and support the production of our “Made in the USA” products. Throughout the sector, manufacturers rely on nearly \$297 billion in imported machinery, predominantly from allied trading partners with whom the U.S. has trade agreements or is currently negotiating trade agreements. Ensuring reliable, low-cost access to these vital inputs—when used to support manufacturing activity in the U.S.—would supercharge our ability to invest, grow, and create jobs in America.

### *Permitting Reform and Energy Dominance*

Energy demand across the country is experiencing unprecedented explosive growth, and it is not expected to slow down. This is especially true for manufacturers, as our industry uses a third of the nation’s energy. Kentucky has seen some key power plant closures in recent years that have driven up energy costs and weighing down capacity. Manufacturers need to be able to produce and use every energy source available to meet this critical moment. In short, manufacturers need American energy dominance, bolstered by an all-of-the-above energy strategy, that allows our industry to innovate, build, and grow here at home.

To achieve this objective, we must reform our nation’s broken and out-of-date permitting processes. It should not take the United States 80% longer to permit a project as compared to other major, developed nations. Unclear timelines, lack of agency coordination, overlapping statutes, and endless litigation continue to drive up the costs of critical projects or halt them altogether. This impacts our ability to get new shop floors up and running—and our access to affordable, reliable energy to power those shop floors.

### *Manufacturing Workforce Development*

Manufacturers have a deep understanding of their workforce needs and the negative impact on their bottom line when they do not have the talent to fill necessary roles. Our industry has long invested and taken an active role in building a well-trained, future-ready workforce—



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and Zoeller is no exception. As manufacturing in the U.S. grows and job roles evolve, especially with the integration of AI, there is an urgent need for stronger, more responsive training pathways to fill high-skill, high-wage roles.

At Zoeller, we do everything we can to ensure that when we hire an employee, we keep them. We offer strong benefits, give our employees extra time off for community volunteering, and treat them well. We have incredibly strong retention of our employees, with many employees working at Zoeller across multiple generations. We routinely promote internal candidates – providing them with additional training as needed to ensure that they can do new jobs and develop new skills. We do this because we know that attracting and retaining a strong workforce can be a challenge. There are 400,000 open positions in the manufacturing sector, and if we are going to have the workforce to expand manufacturing in the United States, we need take action to get there.

This is particularly important as AI augments the jobs that manufacturing workers perform. Manufacturing workers increasingly need new skills to adapt to the increasingly sophisticated technologies being utilized. At stake is not only America’s manufacturing potential, but also the ability of our country to deploy AI for broad-based economic growth. The future economy will be defined by our ability to lead in manufacturing and artificial intelligence—and for both of those goals, we need a workforce that can meet the moment.

## **Conclusion**

Zoeller is proud of our legacy of manufacturing in America, and to be part of an incredible industry that has helped drive America’s history. From the factories of the Industrial Revolution to the assembly lines that mobilized the Arsenal of Democracy, from the boom that built the middle class to the advanced production that created the modern economy, the story of America goes hand in hand with the story of manufacturing. Manufacturing is a part of who the Zoeller family is, and it’s a part of who America is. I could not be prouder to testify before the Senate Small Business Committee today in honor of America’s 250<sup>th</sup> birthday. Thank you for all the recent efforts to support manufacturing in America and know that the Zoeller Company is rooting for you to continue to succeed in making America the best country in the world to make things.