



## [Educating Congress about Robots in Manufacturing](#)

By Jeff Burnstein, President, Robotic Industries Association



Left to right: Jeff Burnstein, Drew Greenblatt, Curtis Richardson

Last week (July 14) a group of key industry leaders joined me in Washington DC for a meeting of the Congressional Robotics Caucus. I presented some key facts about the current state of robotics in the U.S., while RIA Board Member Curtis Richardson of Spirit Aerosystems and [Drew Greenblatt](#) of [Marlin Steel Wire](#) gave real-world examples of the [importance of robotics to manufacturers](#) of all sizes.

The Robotics Caucus, chaired by Congressman Doyle of Pennsylvania and co-chaired by Congressman Gingery of Georgia, plays an important role in helping educate Congress about robotics. And it's not just Congress they help educate, but also several government organizations and other Washington-based trade groups. We were very happy to have in attendance Chuck Thorpe, the Assistant Director for Advanced Manufacturing and Robotics of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). OSTP is the driving force behind the new National Robotics Initiative and we look forward to working with Chuck as the program takes shape.

Education is one of the most important roles RIA plays. I am amazed at some of the misperceptions about robotics that I encounter on a daily basis. While at a meeting in Washington during my trip, I was asked why it was necessary to educate people about robots since they clearly were being used everywhere already. I explained that robot sales in the US, despite a recent rebound, still hadn't returned to their all-time highs, in part because of continuing perceptions that they only make sense for large companies. Fortunately, some small business owners like [Drew Greenblatt](#) are willing to come forward to help dispel that myth.

Today I read an article in *Newsweek* about robots stealing the jobs of American workers. Though I'm quoted saying that robots save jobs, I actually also explained to the reporter that robots create jobs, too. Curtis Richardson and Drew Greenblatt helped hammer home this message in their [presentations to the Robotics Caucus](#). Without robots, their



Congressman Gingery of Georgia, co-chair of the Congressional Robotics Caucus, gathers with Jeff, Drew and Curtis

companies would be far less competitive, meaning they would not be able to win the business necessary to expand their workforce.

We will continue to do our best to educate Congress and the rest of the world about robotics. The technology is too critical to our success as a nation to back down now. It's gratifying to see that we are making headway, as the National Robotics Initiative demonstrates.

<http://roboticsonline.wordpress.com/2011/07/18/educating-congress-about-robots-in-manufacturing/>

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