

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Release Date: Wednesday, October 26, 2011**

*Media contact: Melanie Baillargeon, Director of Communications;  
(207) 623-4568, ext. 110; melanieb@mainechamber.org*

---

### ***Maine's business community pledges to build a skilled workforce***

#### ***Keynote speaker John Ratzenberger promotes the economic benefits of a strong manufacturing sector***

BANGOR (October 26, 2011) – Actor, entrepreneur and skilled worker advocate John Ratzenberger presented the keynote address to a crowd of nearly 400 at the Maine State Chamber of Commerce's Annual Awards Dinner tonight to discuss his recently launched, year-long campaign to inspire communities to act on a simple goal - 10 million new skilled jobs by 2020. The Maine State Chamber has joined this pledge and will be spearheading the effort in Maine.

The "10 by 20 Pledge for America" campaign, hosted by Center for America (CFA; [www.centerforamerica.org](http://www.centerforamerica.org)) spotlights hundreds of training programs across America that provide the skills necessary to fill millions of jobs - many of which are unfilled right now! The pledge campaign also provides practical steps people can take in their own communities to jump start skills training between employers, schools and community organizations.

America faces a crisis of epic proportions. The U.S. Department of Labor forecasts that by 2012, there will be a shortfall of nearly three million skilled worker positions in America. The average age of skilled workers in many trades is 54-56 years old, and as this veteran group retires, there are not enough trained workers to replace them. Today's shortage sharply reduces the growth of U.S. gross domestic product — certainly not a help in the current economy.

"We've heard from Washington, and we've heard from Wall Street - now it's time we hear from Main Street about solutions to the jobs crisis," said John Ratzenberger, a CFA Senior Fellow. "Putting America back to work starts in our communities - and everyone has a stake in the solution."

"We are excited to pursue this opportunity further," comments Dana Connors, president of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. "The 10 by 20 campaign challenges us to lift the profile of Maine's manufacturing sector, a part of our economy with a vibrant, rich history."

The Maine State Chamber will be working with various partners during this campaign, including the Legislature, the LePage administration, the Maine Community College System, the Maine Manufacturers Association, and the Maine State Chamber's InternHelpME.com program.

**About John Ratzenberger...**

John is an outspoken advocate for American-made products and the companies that keep Americans working. John embarked on a yearlong commitment with the Association for American Manufacturing and US Steelworkers to create a Presidential Town Hall Tour. The Town Hall series brought attention to issues that American voters were demanding to hear about - a real commitment from presidential candidates to ensure a strong manufacturing industry. During the town hall events, John encouraged voters to ask the presidential candidates what specific policies they will enact to strengthen the American manufacturing base, which is vital to our economic and national security.

John was invited to address Congress and its Manufacturing Caucus that same year, for which he prepared his oft-quoted speech "The Industrial Tsunami Heading Our Way." He continues to work with politicians on both sides of the isle to ensure that the American manufacturing industry has a voice in Washington.

Currently, he sits on the board of Center for America where he works tirelessly to educate, motivate and empower Americans to expand skills, entrepreneurship, prosperity and freedom.

**About the Maine State Chamber of Commerce...**

The Maine State Chamber of Commerce represents a diverse network of 5,000 businesses statewide and advocates on behalf of their interests before the Legislature and regulatory agencies and through conferences, seminars, and affiliated programs. Through its OneVoice program, the Maine State Chamber represents thousands of businesses with fewer than 10 employees. Its Grassroots Action Network works to involve members and their employees in the legislative process through outreach campaigns.

-END-