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Manufacturers make pitch to Hoyer, Sarbanes

Companies 'need all the help they can get right now,' says trade group leader

by C. Benjamin Ford, Staff Writer

U.S. House Majority Whip Steny H. Hoyer told a business roundtable at a museum dedicated to Baltimore's manufacturing past that the future of the nation's economy must involve a restoration of its manufacturing base.

The gathering was hosted by the Regional Manufacturing Institute of Maryland, a Baltimore advocacy group for manufacturers.

"For the first time in 20 years, you've got the powerful people talking about the need to get back to manufacturing in this country," institute President Michael Galiazzo said. "You've got the president last month having two major news conferences about manufacturing. You've got a powerful congressman and an up-and-comer here having a frank discussion about the importance of manufacturing. In my book that's a grand slam."

The invitation-only event at the Baltimore Museum of Industry drew about 65 people, Galiazzo said.

"You had Democrats and Republicans in the room all agreeing we need manufacturing," he said.

Gene Turner, president of the Manufacturers' Alliance of Maryland, a trade group, agreed.

"Manufacturers need about all the help they can get right now," said Turner, who was unable to attend the event due to a scheduling conflict.

Hoyer (D-Dist. 5) of Mechanicsville was joined at the event by Rep. John Sarbanes (D-Dist. 3) of Towson, part of their “Make It In America” campaign to tout federal tax cuts for manufacturers, education investments and streamlining the patent-approval process to help manufacturers.

“We are focusing on building manufacturing back to where it was some years ago to get businesses to make it in America and sell their products around the world and here,” Hoyer said in a telephone interview.

“If we take all of the products we invent and develop and take them to scale overseas in the not-too-distant future, the inventors will migrate overseas as well,” Hoyer said. “We will not be the kind of competitive society we want to be.”

Hoyer said there was a good dialogue with the manufacturing executives about the regulatory changes and energy requirements that manufacturers need to succeed.

More also is needed at the state level in Maryland, Hoyer said.

“I’d urge the governor and legislature to look at policies that encourage investment in Maryland, moving to Maryland, staying in Maryland,” Hoyer said. “We need to be business-friendly if we want to grow jobs in our state. Maryland is a very good state to do business in. We have wonderful talent in terms of prospective employees and a quality of life that people enjoy. But yes, we need to do more.”

“There was a sense we’ve all got to work together to put manufacturing back on the map in America,” Galiazzo said of the roundtable discussion. “Our economy needs manufacturing for us to maintain our standard of living.”

About 3,500 businesses, primarily small companies, manufacture in the state, producing everything from aluminum horseshoes for the horse racing industry to machinery, Galiazzo said.

“One of the reasons we’re not getting the attention we should be getting is [people] think manufacturing is dead,” Galiazzo said. “In the past three decades, America in general has allowed our manufacturing to erode. The companies still in business are the ones that I call next-generation manufacturing. They figured out how to navigate in terms of global competitiveness.”

cford@gazette.net

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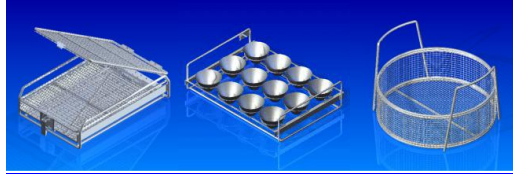
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