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Weekend Forecast

Friday
Sunny
61°/42°



Saturday
Sunny
61°/45°



Sunday



Hawthorne Hosts Career Fair



More than 200 high school 11th and 12th graders from the Centinela Valley Union High School District were invited to participate in the first annual Career Fair presented Feb. 7 at the Hawthorne Memorial Center. The event was the result of a collaboration between the South Bay Workforce Invest Board (SBWIB) and the school district. The photo shows students asking career development questions of one of the business representatives at the event. Photo Provided by SBWIB

Flight Industries Land Major Vote of Confidence to Stay Competitive

By Rob McCarthy

South Bay's space and air defense companies are one step closer to having a state commission to make sure their industry remains competitive and stays grounded in California.

Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi, D-Torrance, introduced a measure to create a California Aerospace and Aviation Commission. Its purpose would be to advise policymakers about what the \$100 billion flight and defense sector in the state's economy needs from state elected officials. The commission would "serve as a central point of contact" for the flight and space mission companies and "support the health and competitiveness" of the businesses -- including those in the South Bay -- that form the backbone of the aerospace and aviation industries in California, according to the bill.

The Assembly voted 75-0 to create a commission dedicated to smoothing the way for the industry's growth as the nation sets its sights toward missions to Mars someday. The 15-member commission would operate without taxpayer dollars and be overseen by the Governor's Office.

"The goal is to bring together the stakeholders and bring together policy recommendations so we can continue to grow and lead the nation and the world in innovation, advanced manufacturing and job creation," Muratsuchi said last month as the bill was advancing in the Assembly.

The advisory commission would have 15 members, with nine being appointed by the governor to represent aviation and aerospace

Sacramento lawmakers. He is chairman of the California Assembly's Select Committee on Aerospace.

California held nearly one-tenth of the combined space and aircraft market in the world in 2016, according to the bill. The aerospace industry is "being challenged" by foreign competitors with emerging economies and the technology they lacked in the past. The commission-creation measure says the state must prepare in case of military base closures by the Department of Defense and shifts in funding priorities by NASA.

Florida has enticed at least one California aerospace company to relocate, and industry leaders say that Space Florida has the money and clout with lawmakers that is lacking here. Sean Casey, managing director of the Silicon Valley Space Center, told an industry publication that other states take a more aggressive approach to convincing companies to leave California.

The Assembly's full-throated endorsement of a California Aerospace and Aviation Commission delivered a message that it's taking the challenge by Space Florida very seriously. Judy Kruger, who oversees aerospace sector activities at the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) had high praise and hopes that the commission will become a reality soon.

The Assembly vote was a small step for the South Bay players in aerospace, which according to the bill is among California's largest industries and employers. It generates \$140 billion per year within the state, making it a global leader, according to figures provided

"The state hears and sees what's happening in the industry and wants to protect it and grow it," Kruger said, adding "it also sends a message outside the state of California."

Texas, Georgia and Michigan are moving forward to create commissions, which the LAEDC says are completely dedicated to growing their states' aerospace industries. The work envisioned for the California body will be to market the state's tax and business climate at industry events where other states will have a presence.

The LAEDC has backed the bill to create a California commission to protect against states looking to "poach our aerospace assets," it says. The bill got another huge lift right after the Assembly voted: SpaceX in Hawthorne successfully launched its powerful Falcon Heavy into space. The company calls its Falcon Heavy the most powerful rocket in service today, able to carry a fully loaded and fueled 737 jetliner weighing 141,000 pounds into orbit.

The Legislature lately has shown a willingness to help defense contractors to be competitive in bidding for federal contracts. Lawmakers in 2014 supported an enhanced tax credit and tax exemption for Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, both of whom were competing for federal Department of Defense contracts.

In 2016, the Legislature again approved a tax measure favorable to defense and aerospace manufacturers. Lawmakers extended a sales and use tax exemption on manufacturing equipment.

Aerospace is prized by state and local