



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 25, 2004

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GOVERNOR CONTINUES FIGHT TO SAVE SPRINGFIELD AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE

Enormous Contributions to National Security and Economy Highlighted by State and Local Leaders at Local Rally

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod Blagojevich is continuing his comprehensive campaign to protect the Springfield Air National Guard Base from closing. Through *Opportunity Returns*, his extensive plan to promote economic growth and create more jobs in the Central region, the Governor is leading a coordinated effort with the Illinois Congressional Delegation, other elected officials and local leaders to prevent the Springfield Air National Guard Base, and three other Illinois bases, from ending up on the Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) list that will be announced next year. The Governor recently traveled again to Washington, DC to make Illinois' case for why the Air National Guard Bases in Springfield and Peoria, the Rock Island Arsenal and Scott Air Force Base should remain open.

"The Springfield Air National Guard Base is tremendously important to the security of our state and our country. Moreover, its economic impact reaches far and wide, giving rise to a number of jobs in the area whose future hinges on the base's existence. Working together, we will continue to make a very compelling case for why none of Illinois' bases should close. Like all *Opportunity Returns* initiatives, we believe that a pro-active, aggressive plan of action is the only one to take. We won't rest until our mission is accomplished," Governor Blagojevich said.

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin, state elected officials, Springfield Mayor Timothy Davlin, and local business owners discussed the base's critical role in defending our country and its enormous economic contributions. Local business owners who attended included David Hayes, co-owner of the Air Jiffy Convenience Store and A&W located across the street from the base, who would lose a substantial amount of business if it closes.

The PMA Group, the military affairs firm that the Governor recently hired to assist in the efforts to protect this base, was also in Springfield meeting with elected officials and business leaders.

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The Springfield Air National Guard Base, which contributes more than **\$60 million** into the local economy, is located at the Springfield Capitol Airport and provides critical support to the U.S. Air Force, Department of Defense and our allies related to its flying military missions, including air to air, air to ground, air support, and search and rescue teams. The unit also has several other crucial missions from engineer and communication teams to many other one, two or 20 person teams related to different military support missions, security police and chaplains of several denominations. This unit also has firefighters with a support agreement where the U.S. Air Force provides 100% of the airport's crash fire protection for both the commercial airport and the air guard. Homeland defense is also an important part of its portfolio because it serves as a back up for protecting civilian commercial aircraft for Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City and Indianapolis. This unit is ready for the next generation of Air Force aircraft because the base has extra ramp space available. The 183rd Fighter Wing has the desire, capability and the work ethic to handle any future missions with full community support for a seamless transition when called upon to meet any joint fighting, training and readiness requirement.

Under BRAC, an independent commission evaluates the Pentagon's closure recommendations and then develops a final list of bases to be closed. Congress then has the option to approve or reject the list as submitted without changes. In the past round of closings, 85% of bases that were placed on the list were eventually shut down. The next round of closings is scheduled to be announced in 2005.

The *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois' history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn't work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to business.

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