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Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOVERNOR BLAGOJEVICH ONCE AGAIN TRAVELS TO WASHINGTON, DC TO FIGHT FOR ILLINOIS' MILITARY BASES

WASHINGTON, DC – Continuing the campaign to protect Illinois' four major military bases, Governor Rod Blagojevich again traveled to Washington, DC today to bring the state's case to Capitol Hill. Through *Opportunity Returns*, his comprehensive plan to promote economic growth and create more jobs throughout the state, the Governor is leading a coordinated effort with the Illinois Congressional Delegation, other elected officials and local leaders to prevent these four bases from ending up on the Defense Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) list that will be announced next year. The Governor made an earlier trip in February. In total, Scott Air Force Base, the Rock Island Arsenal, and the National Guard bases in Peoria and Springfield contribute more than **\$2.5 billion** to Illinois' economy and support **70,000 jobs**.

"Our military bases are an absolutely critical part of both our national defense system and the Illinois economy," said Governor Blagojevich. "I want every Illinoisan to know that I will work nonstop, along with our dedicated Congressional delegation and other elected officials, to present our very compelling case. Thousands and thousands of people throughout our state work at these bases and provide important support services to them. They are protecting America's safety every day, and we owe them everything within our power to protect their jobs and livelihoods."

"Scott Air Force Base, Rock Island Arsenal and the Air National Guard Bases in Peoria and Springfield are essential for national security and Illinois' economy. We've seen too many Illinois military installations close in recent years. I am doing everything I can, along with Governor Blagojevich and the entire Illinois Congressional delegation, to keep these facilities open," U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) said.

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.

Scott Air Force Base contributes more than **\$1.5 billion** to the state's economy every year and supports nearly **50,000 jobs**. Scott, which is the largest employer in Southern Illinois, is a major joint command headquarters base located in St. Clair County. It is home to the United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) and the Air Mobility Command (AMC). Scott is also home to the 18th Air Force, 375th Airlift Wing, the 932nd Reserve Airlift Wing and the 126th Air National Guard Refueling Wing. The units of Scott Air Force Base are well trained and have the latest in technology control centers. Scott is centrally located with

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excellent facilities that have growth capability. The construction of MidAmerica St. Louis Airport as a joint-use facility adjacent to the base added a new 10,000-foot runway, a parallel taxiway, and renovated and extended Scott's runway to 8,000 feet. In addition, a new state-of-the-art, FAA traffic control tower was added as the last link in the ability to handle more with maximum safety. The units operating at Scott, coupled with the facility improvements, will accommodate contingencies, mobilization and future force requirements. From deploying troops for national defense to transporting the President of the United States, it's all controlled and directed at Scott.

"This is a top priority for myself, the Governor and the entire Congressional delegation. We will continue working as a team to ensure that Scott Air Force Base and the rest of Illinois' bases continue serving our country with distinction, while making enormous economic contributions," Congressman Jerry Costello (D-Bellefonte) said.

Rock Island Arsenal employs nearly **6,000** people, making it the second largest employer in the Northwest region, supports another **12,000** additional jobs and pumps more than **\$855 million** a year into the local economy. The Arsenal is a center for logistics and sustainment excellence for the Department of Defense (DOD). It is the home to four major U.S. Army headquarters organizations that have regional and global responsibilities to soldiers - ranging from Army munitions management to regional installation management. The Arsenal also houses more than 50 other DOD organizations and provides infrastructure support to all the organizations on the island. The Army's Joint Manufacturing and Technology Center - Rock Island (JTMTC-RI) has the technical expertise and equipment to provide full-service design and prototyping, manufacturing, and testing/simulation for a wide variety of products from rapid response to warfighter requirements for all of the Armed Services. The Arsenal is one of the world's largest weapons manufacturing facilities. This manufacturing mission has been called on to support short-notice, critical items for soldiers in the field, including armored door kits for Humvees, weapons pedestals and electronic night sights for our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Through new business avenues, the Arsenal is also partnering with some non-military entities to assist and advance manufacturing technologies in the private sector.

"This is a fight for national security and more than 70,000 Illinois jobs. Elected officials throughout Illinois are doing everything possible to keep the Rock Island Arsenal, and all of our bases, doing what it does best - defending our country every day," Congressman Lane Evans (D-Rock Island) said.

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.

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"The time to act is right now. I am glad that the Governor, U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert, Senator Durbin, and the entire Illinois Congressional delegation are all united in our efforts to protect these vital military institutions and these crucial jobs," Congressman John Shimkus (R-Collinsville) said.

The Peoria Air National Guard Base, which contributes more than **\$50 million** into the local economy and is located at Greater Peoria Regional Airport, provides exceptional support to the U.S. Air Force, the Department of Defense and our allies. With a 57-year history of diversity in operations, the 182nd Airlift Wing has demonstrated a pivotal response to joint/multinational requirements, including its current involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. The unit's experience and performance in on-going airlift operations, its past experience in fighter operations, and its in-depth expertise in management and control of tactical air assets graphically reflect the reasons for the organization's successes and the frequent recognition received by its members. A major thrust of the 182nd's mission is to provide world-class training and readiness opportunities, not only for its own members, but for those of other organizations and other service departments as well. Superior existing facilities, expansion capability, and recruiting and retention history enable the 182nd to easily accommodate support of operations and training for contingency, mobilization and increased future total force requirements should the Department of Defense deem that appropriate.

"Simply put, our four bases are irreplaceable – both in terms of the role they play in our nation's defense structure, and in the jobs and revenue they bring to our state. I am confident that this coordinated effort will give us the best opportunity to make our case, and I am very hopeful that the BRAC commission will keep these bases open. They are good for America's defense, and they are good for Illinois," said Jack Lavin, Director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

Governor Blagojevich recently announced that Fleishman-Hillard International Communications and its government consulting entity, Fleishman-Hillard Government Relations, will assist in the efforts to save Scott Air Force Base. The PMA Group has also been retained to help protect the Rock Island Arsenal and the Air National Guard Bases in Peoria and Springfield.

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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