



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 25, 2004

news

GOVERNOR CONTINUES FIGHT TO SAVE PEORIA AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE

Rally with State and Local Leaders Highlights Base's Enormous Contributions to National Security and Local Economy

PEORIA – Governor Rod Blagojevich is continuing his comprehensive campaign to protect the Peoria Air National Guard Base from closing. Through *Opportunity Returns*, his extensive plan to promote economic growth and create more jobs in the North Central region, the Governor is leading a coordinated effort with the Illinois Congressional Delegation, other elected officials and local leaders to prevent the Peoria 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 Peoria and Springfield, the Rock Island Arsenal and Scott Air Force Base should remain open.

“The Peoria Air National Guard Base plays an invaluable role in protecting our national security interests, while providing a powerful economic boost to the local economy. The men and women who serve at this base have made enormous personal sacrifices for the benefit of our safety and well-being, and many have close family ties to the city and region. The state owes these individuals more than a debt of gratitude; we owe it to them to do everything in our power to make sure this base stays in operation so it can continue to do what it does best, and so Illinois continues to carry its distinguished reputation as a state who serves its country in the most exemplary way,” Governor Blagojevich said.

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin and Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Jim McConoughey discussed the base's critical role in defending our country and its enormous economic contributions.

A number of local business owners also described what the impact would be if the base closed including - Pete Pasquel, owner of George O. Pasquel Co. which was founded in 1946 and serves and supplies institutional food and equipment for the base and currently has approximately 40 full-time employees; Todd Coulter, Supervisor, Peoria Disposal Company which is the largest privately-owned industrial, commercial and residential solid waste collection, disposal and recycling company in Central Illinois; Wayne Baum, President of CORE Construction - a multi-dimensional general contracting firm with a history going back to 1937 and a leader among central Illinois contractor's of design/build and construction management delivery methods. Mr. Baum is also Vice President of Otto Baum Company, Inc., which has built a reputation for quality performance in the areas of concrete, earthwork, site/civil, and restoration services.

(over)

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

The Peoria Air National Guard Base, which contributes more than **\$50 million** into the economy and contracts with more than 300 local businesses, 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. It supports more than 1200 full-time and part-time employees.

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.

Governor Blagojevich's *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 for the North Central region is a product of significant outreach over several months throughout each region, with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. The more than 40 specific projects that the Governor announced in December for the North Central region are designed to be flexible and effective. Each plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

#####