



opportunityreturns

Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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GOVERNOR AGGRESSIVELY PURSUES NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR NORTHERN STATELINE REGION BY BRINGING FOREIGN TRADE REPRESENTATIVES TO ROCKFORD

SPRINGFIELD – Delivering on an *Opportunity Returns* promise to increase direct foreign investment in the Northern Stateline region, Governor Rod Blagojevich announced that the state is escorting a delegation of Chicago-based, foreign trade commissioners representing 23 countries across the world to Rockford today. The reverse foreign trade mission, sponsored by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), is designed to capitalize on the presence of foreign trade offices in Chicago and Illinois' status as a world-class, strategic location to promote the region as a great place for direct foreign investment and to provide the strategic link needed to increase exports from the Rock River Valley.

“I’m very pleased to welcome the international trade commissioners to Rockford today. Attracting new investment and fostering international trade relationships play a vital role in achieving our common goal of building a more robust, prosperous regional economy. This area has a wealth of attributes to offer investors, and today’s initiative gives us a tremendous opportunity to showcase those attributes to the international business community and continue developing relationships that can pay major economic dividends,” Governor Blagojevich said.

During their visit, the foreign delegation will become acquainted with the strengths and competitive advantages of the Northern Stateline region. Manufacturing has always been the backbone of the Rock River Valley. Through his *Opportunity Returns* plan, Governor Blagojevich has taken quick and aggressive actions to make the manufacturing industry a more dynamic force of growth in the local economy. Many steps have been taken to make the region’s manufacturers more competitive, including the creation of a revolving loan program that will serve as a critical resource to revamp and modernize their equipment, allowing them to become more efficient and expand their operations.

“The economic foundation of this region is very solid. The Governor has a real vision of how best to build upon this foundation and stimulate more widespread growth, and attracting investment from abroad will help accomplish that by strengthening and diversifying our economic portfolio. Today, we are really welcoming the world to Rockford, and that is a tremendous accomplishment,” said State Representative Charles Jefferson (D-Rockford).

Upon arriving at the Northwest Chicagoland Regional Airport, the delegation will listen to a series of presentations by area business and civic leaders. Some of the speakers include: Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin; Doug Scott, the mayor of Rockford, who will welcome the group to the area before speaking about regional growth and infrastructure; Bob Trojan of the Rockford Regional Chamber of Commerce, who will talk about the region’s manufacturing capabilities; Robert O’Brien, Jr.,

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Executive Director of the Northwest Chicagoland Regional Airport, who will speak about transportation and foreign trade zones in the area, and Dr. John Peters, President of Northern Illinois University, who will talk about the regional education as it relates to increasing competitiveness.

During lunch, Ross Harano, Managing Director of the Illinois Trade Office, will speak about the international focus of the Governor's *Opportunity Returns* plan, after which the group will take part in roundtable discussions. Afternoon events will include a tour of the Japanese gardens, a visit to the EIGERlab, a cutting edge research facility positioning Illinois for new opportunities in emerging markets, and a bus tour of the new Global III Intermodal hub, a loading and unloading facility for rail traffic moving through Northern Illinois that is already proving to be a great catalyst of economic growth along the I-88 corridor.

"The Governor's *Opportunity Returns* initiative for the Northern Stateline region provides a detailed plan of action to jumpstart this economy, and that plan is hard at work today. We're upgrading the skills of the regional workforce, building local infrastructure, fostering energy independence, and trying to maximize international trade opportunities and attract new investments. Our guests visiting Rockford today will get to see this progress firsthand and the strong economic potential this region holds. Ultimately, we're optimistic that they will want to be a part of a more vibrant economic future," DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

The countries represented by the delegation of foreign-trade commissioners are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, China, Denmark, Great Britain, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Quebec, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, and Taipei.

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 Northern Stateline region is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. The 30 specific projects that the Governor announced in October for the Rock River Valley are designed to be flexible and effective. This plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

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