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Senator Murphy's Compact for Connecticut's Manufacturers

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I recently attended a symposium at Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport, where senator Chris Murphy was the featured guest speaker. Senator Murphy unveiled his report, A Compact for Connecticut's Manufacturers, which essentially is an outline of the federal policies to grow the manufacturing sector. senator Murphy's initiative appears to be taking a proactive approach to creating new meaningful opportunities for Connecticut residents, as well as workers and businesses beyond our borders.

In senator Murphy's discussion, he pointed out that many still consider older traditional manufacturing, such as tool and die operations and foundries, to be the mainstay of the industrial sector in the state. In actuality, Connecticut is already home to many state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities featuring well ventilated bright open spaces, with CNC machines and robotic systems. One of our challenges in Connecticut is the shortage of available modern industrial plants suitable for new and existing businesses looking to expand or relocate.

Senator Murphy's report outlines specific action items, some which were highlighted as discussion points at the symposium.

- * Invest federal resources to support programming that encourage middle and high school students to pursue education and employment in manufacturing.
- * Fund the GEAR UP program (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) nationally. This program should include science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
- * Reauthorize the America COMPETES Act, with an emphasis on the programs that increase technology and competitiveness for manufacturers. Congress passed the America COMPETES Act in 2008 to invest in innovation through research and development; however this Act expired at the end of 2013.
- * Identify current and proposed federal rules and regulations that impose a disproportionate impact on manufacturers.
- * Insist on a stronger small and medium-sized business advocate and liaison in federal agencies that have regulatory responsibility over manufacturers.

Connecticut manufacturing had 300,000 employees in 1990. In 2008, that number was reduced to 190,000 manufacturing jobs. Six years later, there are 160,000; the lowest in Connecticut's modern history. Murphy's goal is to get the federal government to change the way it is doing business concerning jobs, taxes, and our outdated highway system and related infrastructure.

In the Compact for Connecticut Manufacturers report, senator Murphy discusses the federal road tax that should be increased to pay for needed improvements to our transportation system. We are all in agreement that the bridges and roadways in Connecticut are in poor condition and that billions of

dollars are needed for improvements. Unfortunately, the downside will relate to an increase in the federal gas tax which hasn't been increased in 20 years. Murphy and some of his constituents are proposing an increase, based upon an average in the cost of living for the past 20 years.

I appreciate senator Murphy pushing his initiative aimed at creating positive job opportunities and a better business climate, without worrying about possible negative implications during re-election time. Regardless of your political affiliation, senator Murphy deserves acknowledgement for aggressively addressing issues critical to the health of manufacturing in Connecticut and attempting to bring them to the forefront of government.

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