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## **A modern Navy constructed at Quonset Business Park - by Steven King**

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Quonset Business Park has established itself as the leading engine of economic development and job creation in Rhode Island, hosting nearly 12,000 jobs and over 200 companies. Electric Boat, a producer of nuclear submarines for the United States Navy, is the business park's largest company, employing thousands at their Quonset facility. Electric Boat's presence as an anchor tenant is essential to the continued job creation and attraction of private investment at the Business Park – over 5,300 new jobs and over \$1 billion since 2005.

Electric Boat opened at Quonset Business Park in 1973 to support their Groton, Connecticut facility. Today at Quonset, Electric Boat manufactures major submarine components for the U.S. Navy using digitally controlled machines that cut and bend the large steel plates that make up a submarine hull. The completed submarine hull cylinders are outfitted with tanks, propulsion and auxiliary machinery, piping, wiring and special hull coatings. They are then transported by barge to Groton for completion.

There has been a renewed push in Congress for increased defense spending to modernize the Navy's submarine fleet. U.S. Sen. Jack Reed (R.I.), the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has been instrumental in Electric Boat's expansion in Rhode Island.

Over the next 20 years, the Navy will build 29 Virginia class submarines and 12 Columbia class vessels, with most component parts constructed at Quonset. This has placed Quonset's manufacturing workforce to the forefront of the defense industry. And they are ready for the challenge.

Electric Boat's expansion is occurring in the larger context of growth at Quonset Business Park. Last month, the Quonset Development Corporation (QDC) released the findings of Bryant University's 2019 Economic Impact report. The report shows that Quonset Business Park is a growing manufacturing hub in Rhode Island, hosting 1 of every 6 manufacturing jobs in Rhode Island, totaling 6,748 manufacturing workers here. In the past three years alone, the number of manufacturing jobs at Quonset has grown by 975.

Electric Boat is undergoing a massive expansion at the Business Park to support the new demand for submarine construction, adding to the strong manufacturing jobs numbers in Bryant University's report. In May 2018, Governor Gina Raimondo announced a \$732 million expansion of Electric Boat's Quonset facility, and their goal to hire 1,300 additional workers over the next decade. Governor Raimondo's support has been critical to Electric Boat's expansion at Quonset – a \$14 million investment of state tax dollars to modernize Quonset's infrastructure has laid the foundation for Electric Boat and other tenants to grow at the Park.

The return on investment for Rhode Island is significant – commerce secretary Stefan Pryor, who also chairs the QDC board of directors, estimates the Electric Boat expansion will yield nearly \$100 million in state tax revenues over the next 15 years.

Electric Boat's expansion is expected to be completed in 2021. This expansion will more than double the square footage of Electric Boat's modular assembly space at the business park. Hundreds of construction workers are engaged in creating these facilities. The first major building was completed this summer with work continuing on the others scheduled for completion this year and next.

The QDC continually looks to create an environment for park tenants, like Electric Boat, to expand. Quonset's world-class infrastructure is a critical piece of that puzzle. Rhode Island's Congressional Delegation of senator Reed, U.S. senator Sheldon Whitehouse, U.S. congressman James Langevin and U.S. congressman David Cicilline have secured over \$400 million in federal funds for rail, port, road and highway infrastructure upgrades in recent years.

Gov. Raimondo and secretary Pryor were key to the passage of the \$70 million bond measure in 2016, \$50 million of which will help finance a \$90 million effort to renovate the Port of Davisville's Pier 2. This renovation will increase the capacity of the port by ensuring that Quonset companies have access to modern port facilities. These strategic state and federal investments have established Quonset as a modern business park, capable of housing an expansion of a leading defense contractor for the U.S. Navy.

Quonset's location in the heart of southern New England is another key to the park's success. Having access to our port facilities benefits companies who need quick access to sea shipping routes. Additionally, Quonset Business Park is near major highways like I-95 for shipping by truck. Companies also utilize the park's own freight rail line that makes bringing materials in, and sending products out, a streamlined process. Whatever a company's shipping need may be, Quonset has a solution to reach the large population centers of the northeast with our centralized location near land, sea or rail transport options.

Rhode Island may be the smallest U.S. state, but it's punching above its weight in manufacturing, and Quonset is at the forefront. We look forward to seeing the cutting edge submarines take shape at Electric Boat's facility in the years ahead.

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