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Newsline](#)

[Manufacturing
Our Future
Summit](#)

[Upcoming
Programs](#)

[Resource
Library](#)

[Partners](#)

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From the Desk of Jack Healy

Focus on Manufacturing: Growing Good Jobs in Massachusetts

By Timothy P. Murray, Lt. Governor, Massachusetts

Ask 10 people on the street today how important manufacturing is to the Massachusetts economy and you are likely to get some interesting answers. In fact, some people I speak with think that manufacturing is almost extinct in Massachusetts.

After decades of plant closings and jobs flocking to other states and countries, some of that public perception is understandable. The truth, however, is that manufacturing in Massachusetts is alive and well, with important opportunities for growth.



To help promote public awareness of manufacturing in Massachusetts, and to reach out to employers across the state to see how we can continue to support this vital industry, we called March "**Manufacturing Month**." The goal is to develop an agenda that will allow the Commonwealth to better address the needs of the manufacturing industry and to help position it for sustainable growth.

On March 7, together with the Executive Office of Economic Development and Housing, I kicked-off Manufacturing Month by hosting a roundtable discussion at the Worcester Vocational High School. It was a great start. We heard from CEOs, industry and

trade groups, and education and training professionals about the challenges they face and the successes they are achieving everyday in Massachusetts.

Consider the statistics: Today, manufacturing remains the fourth-largest employer in Massachusetts, with 300,000 jobs that pay, on average, \$65,000 a year—nearly \$12,000 above the state average annual wage. Exports from Massachusetts manufacturing companies exceeded \$25 billion in 2007, representing a 47 % increase over 2001.

It is no secret that manufacturing in Massachusetts today is not what it was generations ago. What is a constant, however, is that whether it is fabricated metal, paper, aerospace, medical devices, alternative energy, information technology or a range of other sectors, manufacturing in Massachusetts is all about combining innovation with our highly skilled workforce to make high quality products that can compete anywhere in the world.

Our job as we focus our economic development team on manufacturing, is to see what state government is doing right, what we're doing wrong, and to identify new initiatives we can explore to support manufacturing across the Commonwealth. We also want to see what is working well in some parts of the state, and replicate those efforts statewide.

For example, Jack Healy from the Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MassMEP) recently announced a new program that MassMEP, MassDevelopment, and the Associated Industries of Massachusetts Manufacturing Institute, are working on to help companies reinvent themselves to succeed in the new economy called the [Next Generation Manufacturing Initiative \(NGMI\)](#). NGMI will work with five companies to identify their strengths and weaknesses, determine short and long term return on investment, and provide a technology roadmap to help the companies compete and succeed.

The Commonwealth already has a range of incentives and technical and financing assistance available—like the Workforce Training Fund and the 3% investment tax credit which have both seen great success. In just the last year, using the tools we have available, we have helped companies, like Evergreen Solar and the New England Confectionary Company (NECCO, the maker of the candy valentine hearts that we are all familiar with), stay and grow in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Office of Business Development and our Labor and Workforce Secretariat are working every day to help companies across the Commonwealth expand, implement training programs, maximize productivity and, subsequently, sharpen their competitive edge for success.

Our Life Sciences Initiative, which we hope will soon see final passage in the legislature, will positively impact the specific manufacturing sector in Massachusetts. Drug development, biotechnology, and medical devices companies will benefit and continue to thrive.

We also realize that while many manufacturing companies in Massachusetts are succeeding in the new global economy, others continue to struggle. That's why our focus will be to explore all the elements that affect manufacturing in Massachusetts.

Our administration is committed to working together with businesses, vocational and technical schools, colleges and universities to develop an aggressive manufacturing agenda, from training the next generation of the workforce, to helping companies on the edge re-position themselves for growth.

Throughout March, we hosted events around the state to shine a spotlight on the critical role manufacturing plays in our economy and to identify areas where we can help. Our goal is to continue to partner with manufacturing companies, as we work to develop a manufacturing-specific agenda that will better address the needs of the industry and the workforce, not only for this month, but for generations to come.

Timothy P. Murray is the lieutenant governor of Massachusetts. He can be reached at LtGovOffice@state.ma.us

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