



## The Republican.

### Manufacturing holds promise for WMass

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Reports about the death of manufacturing in Western Massachusetts have been greatly exaggerated.

Just ask Richard W. Patterson, a vice president at B&E Tool Company of Southwick, or Mark E. DiLorenzo, president of Tell Tool Inc. of Westfield. During a meeting in Springfield this week, they told Lt. Gov. Timothy L. Murray that their businesses are humming. In fact, the only thing putting the brakes on expansion is a shortage of trained workers.

"We have a steam shovel digging up our parking lot for another addition. ... There's a real urgency here," Patterson said. DiLorenzo had a similar story to tell. "We're turning away work because we don't have enough staff to fill orders."

During the roundtable hosted by the Western Massachusetts Chapter of the National Tooling and Machining Association at the Roger L. Putnam Vocational Technical High School in Springfield, they urged the state to devote more resources to worker training. And Putnam Principal Kevin McCaskill suggested that the state set aside funds to replace the school's out-of-date equipment with modern machinery used by industry today.

Both are reasonable requests. The machining association estimates that regional manufacturers have more than 400 vacancies, and just 30 student graduates able to fill those slots annually. The association also provided statistics showing that annual wages in the state's manufacturing industry last year were about \$62,000. That figure is very competitive with salaries paid for health care workers and teachers.

Funding for training and new equipment to spur a manufacturing resurgence here in Western Massachusetts could improve the economic outlook for the entire region and help Gov. Deval L. Patrick's administration realize its goal of creating 100,000 jobs in the next four years.

Murray's visit to Springfield is a good sign that the state is listening to people who work in the trenches in the Pioneer Valley.

The manufacturing industry has a lot of life left in it. The industry just needs a helping hand.

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