

## Machine shop chiefs tell Murray: 'We need skilled workers'

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SPRINGFIELD - Manufacturing company executives told Lt. Gov. Timothy P. Murray today that business is brisk, but they can't find enough skilled workers to fill job openings.

"We have a steam shovel digging up our parking lot for another addition. ... There's a real urgency here," said Richard W. Patterson, a vice president at B&E Tool Company Inc., of Southwick.

At a roundtable hosted by the Western Massachusetts Chapter of the National Tooling and Machining Association, members said the state needs to devote more resources to worker training.

"Vocational schools don't have the capacity to fill our needs," said Tell Tool Inc. president Mark E. DiLorenzo. "We're turning away work because we don't have enough staff to fill orders."

The meeting was held at Springfield's Roger L. Putnam Vocational-Technical High School, where principal Kevin L. McCaskill said his staff is pursuing "every possible avenue" to replace out-of-date equipment. McCaskill said the state should set aside funds to provide modern machinery to vocational schools.

The machining association, which includes many companies building parts for the aerospace and defense industries, also called for creation of a state financing program to enable them to buy new equipment more easily.

Tell Tool, of Westfield, employs 125, but ideal staffing is 150, DiLorenzo said, adding people need to understand a modern manufacturing company is not "a dark, dirty, dangerous place to work."

The machining association recently surveyed 30 area manufacturing companies and found 97 job openings. The firms employ around 1,800.

However, the association estimates regional manufacturers have more than 400 vacancies, and just 30 students graduate annually from relevant local programs.

The association also provided statistics showing average annual wages in the Massachusetts manufacturing industry last year were about \$62,000, substantially higher than in health care, where salaries averaged \$42,000, and education, at \$44,000.

David M. Cruise, manager of Regional NetWorks, a joint project of the machining association and the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, said young people who receive sufficient training in high school can quickly find well-paid jobs in precision manufacturing. "There are career opportunities for these young people," Cruise said.

The association's chapter president, Larry A. Maier, said he appreciates Murray's willingness to hear industry concerns. "This is the lieutenant governor's third time meeting with our group," Maier said.

At a meeting with Wilbraham officials, Murray said Gov. Deval L. Patrick's administration's goal is to create 100,000 jobs in the next four years.

"We are active, visible and listening in all regions," Murray said at a meeting hosted by state Rep. Angelo J. Puppolo Jr., D-Springfield.

Murray said the administration is touting the state's advantages in manufacturing, life sciences, biotechnology and health care delivery and is also listening to requests for help with public safety needs.

Puppolo said Wilbraham needs a new public safety complex, East Longmeadow needs a new \$400,000 fire apparatus, and Springfield needs a combined Sumner Avenue and Forest Park fire station.

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