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News

Officials stress skilled labor

J. Brian Ewing
Staff Writer
Friday, August 26, 2005

Politicians from both sides of the aisle agree North Carolina needs skilled laborers.

Labor education was the focus of the third annual Governmental Issues Luncheon held Thursday at Meadow Greens Country Club.

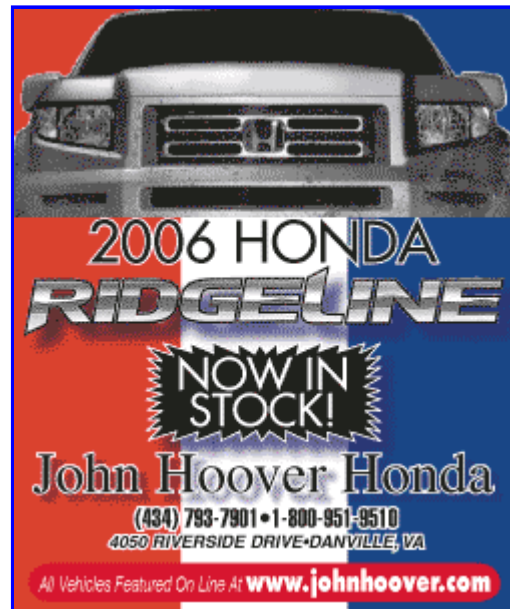
Guest speakers Congressman Brad Miller, D-13th District, and Commissioner of Labor Cherie Berry, R, shared the podium during the luncheon. Both discussed the growing need for labor education in the state.

"If we're going to continue to have the highest standard of living in the world, we're going to have to continue to have the highest level of skilled workers," Miller said.

Miller praised Rockingham Community College and community colleges across the state for working with local industry to meet skilled labor needs.

Berry echoed those praises and talked up the Department of Labor's apprenticeship program.

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The state created the program in 1937 to set standards for on-the-job training. Berry said there are 900 careers eligible for the program in North Carolina and more than 2,000 people currently enrolled.

Miller said the nation needs an innovative economy as well. He called for more investment in research and cited work in cutting-edge nanotechnology, which could produce cars able to get 37 miles per gallon, as proof of a valuable return on the investment.

Chamber of Commerce President Cindy Adams said the Governmental Relations division of the chamber launched the luncheons in 2002 to give voters an opportunity to meet their elected officials.

Adams said having worked so closely with many of the local businesses she was pleased to hear Miller and Berry discuss skilled labor.

"A company is as successful as its workforce, so it is of the utmost importance to be the best you can be," Adams said.

Miller summed up the issues discussed at the event with a literary allusion.

"We do have a challenge in front of us and it will be like Alice in Wonderland, we'll have to run very fast to stay in the same place," Miller said.

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