

Gov. Perdue Wants North Carolina To Be Global Player

By Kim Genardo 1 day, 13 hours ago

Gov. Bev Perdue says the time and energy she placed into a trade mission to Asia will be well worth it.

The governor and commerce secretary spent two weeks in Japan and China to drum up new business for the state.

According to the North Carolina Commerce Department, China is the state's second largest trading partner importing \$1.9 billion in North Carolina goods.

Japan is fourth, importing \$1.7 billion in products.

But Japan has a far greater imprint in the state with 150 Japanese-owned companies employing 18,000 people as compared with a dozen Chinese companies employing 2,500 North Carolinians.

This trade mission was also about opening the gateway to China to start developing partnerships that may one day create more jobs.

"My goal is for North Carolina to be a global player and this is one of the ways to make it happen," said Perdue.

First stop: Tokyo to meet with established business partners that former Gov. Jim Hunt developed over the past twenty years.

"It was called aftercare. They liked the fact that a current governor would come and check on them and thank them for their business in North Carolina," said Perdue.

Next stop: Beijing to forge new ground with a country that has one of the fastest growing economies.

"This is our first dip in the waters. I think its time and energy invested that's well worth it for people in North Carolina. Jobs here, jobs there," said Perdue.

But not everyone agreed with the state spending more than \$80,000 on a recruitment mission.

Civitas polled 600 likely voters Oct. 20 and 21 and the survey found 71.8 percent disapproved of spending money on the trade mission.

The state did use \$90,000 in private funds to supplement the trip.

So we asked Gov. Perdue if the trade mission worth the price.

"It would've been ridiculous for us not to do it. The long term relationship with our number

2 trading partner (China) is limitless,” said Perdue.

In Research Triangle Park, The Hamner Institutes for Health Sciences supported the trip and ran two biosciences business seminars for the state in Beijing and Shanghai.

“The governor being there was extremely important. It sent a message to Chinese bioscience companies about North Carolina’s commitment. It’s a great opportunity for the state,” said Dr. Bill Greenlee, The Institutes’ Chief Executive Officer.

“We see this as very critical part in the continuum from technology creation to technology commercialization,” Greenlee added.

Although the ultimate payoff may take a decade, the governor hopes for a real deal soon.

“One business I spoke with I think will announce some kind of North Carolina investment sometime mid-year 2010, maybe before that,” said Perdue.

“Success overtime will be in reverse investment. Companies like Lenovo and Honda Jet are two examples from Asia,” said Deputy Secretary of Commerce Dale Carroll. “They’ll continue to grow their presence here and allow us to attract other companies in various sectors of the economy.”