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Oklahoma's Rural Communities Offer Opportunities for Aerospace Companies

OKLAHOMA – Aerospace isn't just for big cities. That was the message Senator Roger Thompson wanted to get across in his recent meeting in Okemah about Aerospace Industry Opportunities. Sen. Thompson was joined at the meeting by numerous faces of Oklahoma's aerospace industry, including Senator Paul Rosino, retired Brigadier General Brent Wright and Leshia Pearson from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce's aerospace and defense team, Dr. Marcie Mack and Eddie Compton from Oklahoma Career Tech, and Paula Kedy with the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission. Together, the group discussed how smaller communities can benefit from building an environment for aviation and aerospace, particularly through incorporating more aerospace in all levels of local education and bringing together local partners.

“While Oklahoma City and Tulsa are home to the two largest aerospace Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul facilities in the world, Oklahoma's expertise in and workforce for this vital industry extends well beyond our metropolitan areas,” said Sen. Thompson. “Rural Oklahoma and the people in my district are poised to advance aerospace to the next level in our state. I look forward to helping Oklahoma's smaller communities capitalize on the opportunity to recruit these quality jobs.”

Despite a global pandemic, Oklahoma has seen significant gains in the aerospace industry in the past year, solidifying its reputation as the fastest growing industry in the state. What is surprising to some is that many of the state's recent announcements have been from more rural areas, including Consolidated Turbine Specialists (CTS) located in Bristow, Mint Turbines in Stroud, PAS MRO in Bristow and Ferra Aerospace in Grove.

Additionally, many of Oklahoma's aerospace repair companies and parts suppliers are located in rural areas of the state, including a significant cluster of aerospace companies in Grove. As these areas continue to attract aerospace operations, they must also work to ensure that these companies have access to a skilled workforce. Critical to these efforts are the development of local partnerships to show support for potential new business and to create pathways for developing and maintaining the necessary workforce.



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Incorporating aerospace into all levels of education exposes students to the vast careers associated in the aerospace industry. During the meeting in Okemah, Dr. Marcie Mack and Eddie Compton (Oklahoma CareerTech) discussed training opportunities and how CareerTech works with the Aerospace Industry to create a work-ready workforce to take advantage of the fast-growing opportunities in Aerospace in Oklahoma. Additionally, Paula Kedy (Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission) discussed Educational Program Opportunities available to Oklahoma's educational systems and shared success stories about schools that have included aerospace elements into their daily educational curriculums.

“We have shown that aerospace companies can succeed anywhere in Oklahoma,” said Leshia Pearson, ACES Program Manager, Commerce. “Thanks to our educational system and CareerTech training programs, companies can find a pipeline of aerospace talent in any community in the state. There are aviation educational grant programs offered through the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission and free curriculum schools can implement to introduce aerospace and aviation to their students. And with the new Centers for Workforce Excellence spread across the state, communities can help companies find and train the workforce they need to succeed.”

Communities interested in learning more about available resources for the aviation and aerospace sector and how to develop local partnerships to support the industry can contact Leshia Pearson at leshia.pearson@okcommerce.gov or 405-815-5287.

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