Diversifying Hawaii’s Economy

Manufacturing is not commonly considered a contributing industry to Hawaii’s economy. However, manufacturing was responsible for 71% of the state’s export in 2013. From baking cookies and making jewelry to producing clothing or a component piece for furniture, manufacturing is prevalent throughout the state.

Petroleum processing, food and beverage, and shipping repair are some of the largest sectors of our state’s manufacturing industry. There are many more manufacturing sectors that go largely unnoticed in Hawaii. Among these are printing, furniture, fabricated metal, plastics and rubber, precision tools and parts, apparel and leather, and allied products.

In an effort to increase awareness of, strengthen the manufacturing sector and diversify Hawaii’s economy, the Chamber of Commerce Hawaii initiated its Manufacturing in Hawaii initiative in late 2013. Since then, the Chamber has worked alongside other key organizations, including INNOVATE Hawaii and the Hawaii Foreign-Trade Zone, and met with individuals from the private sector to chart a successful future for Hawaii’s manufacturing community.

Over the past year, informational meetings, networking events and educational seminars have been made available to offer support and resources to local manufacturers. These initiatives have provided manufacturers with the opportunity to connect with others in the industry and establish relationships with support organizations that offer valuable resources to help them build, develop and grow their companies.

Part of the initiative’s plan is to provide a central database of Hawaii manufacturers – a comprehensive list of each manufacturer identified by their NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) code and the type of manufacturing or service provided. Visit the Manufacturer’s Portal at cochawaii.org to find out more about the initiative and to get involved.

On November 9, the Chamber’s Military Affairs Council kicked off the “Keep Hawaii’s Heroes” campaign, in partnership with the C&C of Honolulu and other community leaders and state legislators. Campaign co-chairs Mayor Kirk Caldwell and Carole Kai, alongside our Congressional Delegation as Honorary Co-chairs, are leading the effort to show Hawaii’s strong support for the military and to prepare for the upcoming Army listening session on January 27 at the Hale Koa Hotel. It will be critical to show overwhelming community support at this session.

As part of the Army’s 2020 Force Structure Realignment Special Programmatic Environmental Assessment (SPEA), the Army is considering a proposal that would eliminate 19,800 soldiers from Fort Shafter and Schofield Barracks, and approximately 30,000 civilians, when including family members and others affiliated with the military – roughly 5% of Honolulu’s population. These drastic cuts could cost the state $1.35 billion and 20,000 jobs, and severely impact businesses, particularly small ones whose lifeline depends on military spending. Construction, retail, restaurants, real estate and professional, scientific and technical services industries will suffer and surrounding community populations will diminish.

Cuts across the board are real and inevitable. The question is to what extent. We cannot afford to do nothing. This is the time for our state to step up its efforts and for all of us to voice our support. Other states are investing significant resources to keep the military presence in their state. In the preliminary process, other states have submitted more than 11,000 letters in support of the military. Hawaii, 30 letters.

In addition to having a positive economic impact, military personnel and their families are integral members of our community. They have built communities, sustained businesses and are passionate volunteers for various causes, including helping with natural disaster relief efforts and donating time to various charitable events.

Let’s have a united front in showing our support to the military. As they have had our back, let’s show that we have their back. Sign the petition to keep our heroes in Hawaii at keephawaiisheroes.org.