$2 MILLION IN MANUFACTURING GRANTS AVAILABLE

This past legislative session, the Chamber – with the support of its partners – successfully passed a bill to provide $2 million in grant funding for manufacturers throughout the state as part of its Manufacturing in Hawaii Initiative.

Administered by the High Technology Development Corporation, a draft of the Hawaii Manufacturing Development Program rules can be viewed online at www.htdc.org.

Grants under this program may be used for: (1) purchasing manufacturing equipment; (2) training employees on the use of manufacturing equipment; (3) improving existing energy-efficiency manufacturing equipment or purchasing improved energy-efficiency equipment in the manufacturing process; or (4) studying or planning the implementation of a new manufacturing facility.

These guidelines apply to any purchases, training programs or energy/planning consultations from July 1, 2015.

This grant program was designed to help manufacturers, improve the conditions for producing locally made products and strengthen the Manufacturing in Hawaii Initiative.

A series of events and informational seminars are hosted as part of the Manufacturing in Hawaii Initiative to support manufacturers, as well as garner public awareness of this thriving industry. Seminar topics include: food safety, lean manufacturing, tax law for manufacturers, energy efficiency, exporting, industrial lighting, shipping and logistics and e-commerce, to name a few.

Additionally, there are ample opportunities to network with other manufacturers and the larger business community. Manufacturing tours are also conducted throughout the year which invite the community to learn about companies that produce local products, as well as provide participants with a better understanding of manufacturing’s important role to our economy.

For more information on how to get involved and learn more about this thriving industry in Hawaii, contact Jenny Lee with the Chamber at jlee@cochawaii.org.

Last month, I traveled to South Korea representing the U.S. among 13 other regions including Africa, Asia, South America, Europe and the Middle East, selected as part of the Korea Foundation’s Distinguished Individuals in the Economic Sector Program. Funded by the government, the purpose of the program is to promote a better understanding of Korea within the international community and increase friendship and goodwill between Korea and the rest of the world.

We met with various leaders with the Korea Economic Research Institute, Korea Institute for International Economic Policy, Korea Development Program, Invest Korea Program and the Incheon Free Economic Zone to discuss Korea’s economy and business opportunities. We also attended lectures on the Korean culture and history, and on economic development. While there, meetings were arranged with AmChamber, Korea Importer’s Association and the U.S. Embassy Commercial Service Department to discuss how we can export more of Hawaii’s products and services, especially related to our Manufacturing in Hawaii Initiative.

The Foundation arranged tours of Samsung Innovation Museum, Gyeongbokgung Palace and the War Memorial of Korea. One of the fascinating scheduled tours, was the Demilitarized Zone, the buffer zone between North and South Korea. One of the highlights, for me personally, was having the opportunity to thank a few U.S. servicemen for their service. More than 30,000 military personnel are stationed in Korea and well-accepted into the community. Our military serves an integral and strategic role in the protection of South Korea and the Asia Pacific region.

The trip was productive, educational and informative. It was also inspiring to see how one of the poorest countries in the world is now thriving, particularly in Seoul, which now ranks as one of the top cities in the world. Incheon Airport is consistently ranked as one of the top airports in the world and smart cities are being created throughout the region. With a population of approximately 50 million and a community spirit that emphasizes “we” rather than “I,” it was evident that public and private sectors work collaboratively on economic development to create an environment attractive to foreign investment and businesses.

The program’s mission, connecting people and bridging the world, is the Chamber’s ambition, as well. By participating in this and similar programs, we look forward to continuing to promote Hawaii’s brand and our great state as an international destination with which to do business.