


Analysis projects manufacturing will lead job growth in Oklahoma

Oklahoma Employment Security Commission economist warns about 'uncertain economy.'

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Oklahoma's manufacturing sector is expected to bring 300,000 net new jobs over the next 20 years, according to a report released Wednesday by an affiliate of the State Chamber of Oklahoma.

For every 100 new manufacturing jobs, 240 additional jobs will be created in the state, researchers at Southwestern Oklahoma State University found in analysis sponsored by Oklahoma 21st Century.

“The data shows manufacturing not only is alive and well in Oklahoma, but also the sector will create thousands of new jobs for Oklahomans,” said Mike Seney, executive director of Oklahoma 21st Century.

Based on 2009 data, nearly 4,500 state manufacturers today employ 130,000 Oklahomans, and have an overall economic annual impact of \$41.826 billion on the state's gross state product, the report shows.

Though Oklahoma's manufacturing sector is down with the recession, Seney said, it hasn't taken the hit other states have. His foundation's initial report, based on 2007 data, numbered manufacturing jobs at 151,000, Seney said. But between then and now, that number has dipped as low as 124,000, he said.

“Because of our diversification of industries following the oil bust, we haven't had as dire manufacturing losses as other states,” Seney said.

What's helped Oklahoma manufacturing, Seney said, is its cross-connections between other industries, including energy, agriculture and construction. That includes manufacturers, such as Weyerhaeuser, that produce lumber for new homes — or tractor, combine and horse trailer manufacturers that support the agriculture industry, or manufacturers that support the oil and gas industry.

At Oklahoma City-based Kimray Inc., a global leader in oil and gas production equipment, employment stands at 720 — or 125 more jobs since this time last year, said CEO David Hill.

Kimray, Hill said, has gone counter to the economy, and expanded manufacturing.

“Nothing is made offshore and everything is made in Oklahoma to boot,” Hill said.

According to the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, Oklahoma has added 28,300 nonfarm jobs from June 2010 to June 2011, with manufacturing seeing the highest growth with 11,200 jobs.

Still, OESC economist Lynn Gray cautions, "It's not all sunny skies. Our economy is very uncertain right now and if it barely grows over the next six months, manufacturing may dip."



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