

Lawmakers meet with economic development organizations to explore ways to jumpstart the Pennsylvania economy

Community leaders and lawmakers discuss expanding an economy that works for all

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Three regional economic development organizations convened a bi-partisan group of state lawmakers from Western Pennsylvania today to explore ways to jumpstart the state's economy.

The logo for Pittsburgh Works Together, featuring the words 'PITTSBURGH WORKS' in large, bold, dark blue letters, with 'TOGETHER' in smaller, bold, dark blue letters below it.

Pittsburgh Works Together, an economic development alliance of business and organized labor locals.

[Pittsburgh Works Together](#), the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, and the Regional Industrial Development Corporation (RIDC) collaborated to bring together a bipartisan group of nearly 40 state representatives and senators to display data on the Pittsburgh region's economic performance and offer recommendations on how to increase economic growth and opportunity for all residents.

“

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Greg Bernarding

“We have faced challenges before, but we can overcome them through collaboration and working together, and today's meeting demonstrates that on several levels,” said Mike Huwar, president of Peoples Natural Gas and co-chair of Pittsburgh Works. “The strength of Pittsburgh Works is

bringing together organized labor and business to improve the region. You have three organizations understanding we can be more effective if we work together. And most importantly, you had lawmakers from both parties, from both chambers, seeking common ground on how to move forward.”

Donald F. Smith, Jr., president of RIDC, provided data to the lawmakers showing how the

Pittsburgh regional economy is lagging its peers, and Matt Smith, chief growth officer for the Allegheny Conference, outlined regulatory and business tax reforms that the Shapiro administration and the General Assembly can take to make the state more competitive in attracting and retaining businesses that create jobs and opportunity for its residents.

“Our region has many great attributes, including its universities and vibrant life sciences, autonomous technology and manufacturing sectors, but we are still falling behind other regions that are competing more aggressively for jobs,” Donald Smith said.

Metro Region (MSA)	Job Growth 2018-2023	Current Jobs Versus Pre-Pandemic (Feb. 2020)
Philadelphia (includes MD, NJ, DE)	6.0%	104.1%
Cincinnati	4.8%	103.6%
Columbus	3.9%	102.0%
Cleveland	-0.8%	98.4%
Pittsburgh	-1.2%	98.3%

Metro Region (MSA)	GDP Growth 2017-2022	2022 GDO Versus Pre-Pandemic (2019)
Columbus	11.2%	106.5%
Cincinnati	8.1%	103.0%
Cleveland	7.5%	103.2%
Philadelphia (includes MD, NJ, DE)	4.6%	101.9%
Pittsburgh	1.7%	98.3%

Donald F. Smith, Jr., president of RIDC, provided data to the lawmakers showing how the Pittsburgh regional economy is lagging its peers.

Matt Smith told lawmakers that our region has competitive advantages to build off of – advanced manufacturing, energy, life sciences, robotics and autonomy. He encouraged lawmakers to make investments in programs that accelerate the growth of these opportunities – readying sites, building the necessary infrastructure to support new business investment, providing incentives such as tax and job creation credits, and systemic policy measures such as business tax reform and streamlining the state’s permitting procedures.

“The time is now to identify our most competitive opportunities and to work together toward seizing them in order to ensure future successes for the commonwealth and southwestern Pennsylvania,” Matt Smith said.

The group offered the recent announcement that, after a competitive search, Re:Build Manufacturing is opening a manufacturing facility in New Kensington as an example of the power of collaboration to move the economy forward. The project, which will bring 300 jobs to a former Alcoa research and manufacturing facility, was the result of combined public and private investment, with elected officials from both parties working with the Shapiro administration and General Assembly leaders, Westmoreland County, and municipal officials to make it happen.

Greg Bernarding, the new business manager for the Pittsburgh Regional Building Trades Council and co-chair of Pittsburgh Works, doesn’t want to see what will happen if things don’t change course. He said there are multiple construction projects of \$1 billion or more underway in the Columbus, Ohio, region, including Intel’s \$20 billion computer chip plant. But there are no new projects of that scale in the regional pipeline.

“I don’t want our union tradespeople to have to go somewhere else to work,” Bernarding said. “I want them to have plenty of work here, where their families are, and so they can contribute to

our economy and community.”

Pittsburgh Works Together is a business-organized labor-workforce-economic development alliance working to grow jobs and expand the industries that are the foundation of our economy, including energy, manufacturing, and construction, to provide opportunity for all residents. To learn more, please visit pghworks.com.

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