

Elmore County to benefit from aerospace expansion

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At the Farmborough International Airshow (L-R): Greg Canfield - Director of The Alabama Department of Commerce, Daniele Cagnatel - President and CEO GKN Aerospace North America, Governor Robert Bentley, Leisa Finley - ECEDA Director, Elmore County Commissioner Joe Faulk

Photo: Special to The Indy

Staff Report

Three long range job announcements were made this past week at the Farmborough International Airshow, by Alabama Governor Robert Bentley representing millions of dollars of new investment and at least 700 new jobs related to the Aerospace Industry in the State of Alabama.

Last week Governor Bentley announced GKN Aerospace has opened a new composite design engineering center at its Advanced Composite Structures (ACS) facility in Alabama, enhancing the capabilities of the Elmore County operation that serves major North America-based manufacturers.

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"The aerospace industry is definitely an important target industry to help create new jobs and help enhance our existing work force", Governor Bentley stated at the State's kickoff breakfast in London the day before the show began.

Alabama is now home to more than 300 companies directly related to the aerospace industry. One of the largest of those companies is GKN Aerospace, headquartered in London England. Of GKN's 12,000+ employees worldwide, more than a thousand work in the Elmore County.

Joe Faulk, Elmore County Commissioner, said thanks to Bentley's work Elmore County has benefitted from recent growth in the industry.

"Under the direction of Governor Bentley and Greg Canfield, who heads up the Alabama Department of Commerce, the State of Alabama has seen plenty of growth in the the aerospace industry. Both have publicly spoken to the importance of the Aerospace Industry to our State. GKN Aerospace is one of the leaders of that target industry," Faulk said.

Faulk added that Elmore County has an asset in Leisa Finley of the Elmore County Economic Development Authority.

"We are privileged to have a cooperative countywide economic development effort, lead by Leisa Finley, Director of ECEDA. I have had the opportunity to watch Leisa work with GKN on this particular project for several months. It gives me, as a Commissioner, a great sense of accomplishment to know that because of this project, and others similar to it, our Economic Development Authority has helped to identify educational needs that can benefit companies like GKN," Faulk said. Faulk was referring to the presence of Mark Hienrich, Alabama's Chancellor of the Community College System and other Educational Leaders representing The University of Alabama, Auburn University, and The University of Alabama Huntsville.

"I was able to attend meetings with aerospace company managers and state education leaders, in an effort to better take advantage of particularly the dual enrollment effort now provided through the Community College System," Faulk said. "I am very grateful for the opportunity to attend the airshow this year. The Elmore County Commission continues to prove, along with the State of Alabama, a sustained commitment to help provide career opportunities for our citizens as well as help provide educational opportunities to enhance those careers," Faulk added.