

How to grow jobs***Community leaders discuss recommendations from Arizona Town Hall***[Print Page](#)By **JIM SECKLER/The Daily News**

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KINGMAN — About 60 people attended an outreach program Thursday to hear recommendations on job growth from the Arizona Town Hall held in April.

Arizona Town Hall President Tara Jackson hosted the meeting in Kingman where recommendations from the 96th Arizona Town Hall held in Tucson were presented to an audience of community leaders, business people and residents.

Jackson displayed a slide presentation showing the trend in people's income in Arizona, which has been dropping steadily in the past decade. Another slide showed that high technology jobs have seen the biggest decrease, while businesses including mortgage lenders and banks have increased. She said that what makes a good economy is building products that are sold outside of the state. The state should not build its economy solely on construction jobs, she said.

Kingman Planning and Zoning Director Tom Duranceau said the town hall was held right after Gov. Jan Brewer signed the SB-1070 bill that cracked down on illegal immigration. He said the new law will have an impact on how the state markets itself in attracting new businesses.

He also said a guest worker program is essential especially from support from the agricultural and the cattle industries. He also said Mexico is the state's largest trading partner followed by Canada.

Duranceau also said the state does not have enough start-up capital for new businesses. He told of the cuts to the education budget, which will hamper the state when attracting new businesses because of the state's bad reputation for funding of education.

Randy Nelson, the director of the small business development center at Arizona Western College in Yuma spoke of the CANAMEX corridor highway, which will impact Highway 95 with commerce between Mexico and Canada. He also said most jobs are created by small businesses and Arizona does not fund small business programs. Large corporations also require huge incentives, which the state cannot accommodate.

Nelson also said education is important for the state saying Arizona is 51st in funding for education behind even Puerto Rico. Entrepreneurs who may invent the next Internet program or computer software will not consider moving to the state because their children will not get a quality education.

Several speakers also spoke, almost all saying that education is key to growing the state's economy. One woman urged people to vote against Proposition 302, which would divert tobacco taxes from funding First Things First, a pre-kindergarten program for children, to the state's general fund. Another speaker spoke of expanding the number of degrees available at Arizona universities. He also said the corporate tax rate, one of the highest in the nation, should be lowered.

Mohave County Community Services Director Susie Parel-Duranceau said job training programs for people who do not go to college is also important.

Mohave County Planning and Zoning Commissioner Mehdi Azarmi of Fort Mohave said banks in the state are not lending money and suggested they should not make it difficult for investors to buy and sell homes. He also recommended that banks should drop the interest rate on home mortgages by 2 percent, which would be a stimulus to the economy allowing people to keep more money to put back into the economy by purchasing products.

Other recommendations from the April meeting include improving the education standards to meet workforce needs and copying the best practices from other countries on education. Jobs in renewable energy should also be

pursued. Other recommendations include bringing the Air Force's F-35 training program to the state and improving the relations with Mexico in the areas of energy, commerce and tourism. The town hall also recommended improving the state's public relations, broaden the tax base, make water and power more efficient to allow for growth and to increase the capital to support economic development.

Previous town halls raised issues on transportation, tax revenue, land use and housing and health care. The 97th town hall will be held Nov. 7-10 at the Grand Canyon and will focus on the state in the next 100 years. The 98th town hall will be held in Tucson May 1-4, 2011, and deal with arts, culture and the economy.

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