

Chinese business leaders wooed to invest in Cincinnati

By Mike Boyer • mboyer@enquirer.com • May 27, 2010

Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky was the first stop Thursday for one of the largest Chinese trade delegations to visit the Midwest, and state and local officials didn't waste any time pitching the benefits of investing here.

During a morning-long investment forum at the Hilton Netherlands Plaza hotel downtown, about 100 Chinese business executives and government officials traded business cards and information with an equal number of local business executives.

"Ohio is a good place to do business, primarily because of the people in Ohio," said Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner, who welcomed the Chinese executives led by Wang Chao, assistant minister of commerce for the Chinese government.

Chao, who addressed the group in English, is no stranger to Cincinnati. He said he was last here in 2007 as part of a smaller Chinese trade group. "I'm impressed by the beauty and vitality of the city," he said.

Against the backdrop of the U.S.-China strategic and economic dialogue that wrapped up this week in Beijing, Chao emphasized the importance of trade for both countries.

"It yields rich fruits in the economic market and as foundation for our overall relationship," he told the gathering.

Representatives of the Ohio Department of Development and Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber pitched the area's advantages including transportation, location, research and

educational facilities and workforce for investment.

Neil Hensley, director of economic development for the Cincinnati chamber, told the group: "We hope to see you back here in the future with your U.S. investments."

There is only one direct Chinese investment in the area currently, according to the chamber. Jinshan Pacific Lumber Co. within the last year acquired an idle Loveland lumber mill for hardwood exports.

Shau Zavon, president of the Greater Cincinnati Chinese Chamber of Commerce, said getting the group which included a number of Chinese automotive, agriculture and technology companies, to stop here was a big plus for the region.

"We're the smallest city on their trip," she said. The group stops in Indianapolis today and then goes on to Detroit and San Francisco before returning to China next week.

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Wang Chao, assistant Chinese commerce minister, speaks during a visit by a Chinese trade delegation to Cincinnati, at Hilton Netherland Plaza downtown on Thursday morning.

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