

Boeing Relationship Opens Doors For SC

Meg Kinnard, Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — South Carolina's relationship with aerospace giant Boeing Co. opened doors for the state at a recent international airshow outside London, according to state Commerce Department officials.

"We have access, and we can make appointments with decision-making level people in a variety of companies that, in the past, apparently we had to beg and plead to get an appointment with anyone," Deputy Commerce Secretary George Patrick told reporters during a conference call Thursday.

Patrick— a retired Air Force general — was part of a 28-member delegation that traveled earlier this month to the Farnborough Airshow outside London. Patrick and his boss, Commerce Secretary Bobby Hitt, wouldn't name specific companies that officials met with but did say Thursday the Boeing deal has made others in the aerospace industry look at South Carolina differently.

"The governor is able to get those meetings with the CEO himself or herself," Patrick said, of the state's dealings with prospective companies.

Boeing's \$750 million assembly plant opened in North Charleston last year. Company officials have said they hope to produce four 787s at the facility by the end of the year and eventually make about three-and-a-half planes a month.

That deal, at the time the biggest single industrial investment in state history, grew out of a discussion that Hitt said began at such an airshow.

"Clearly, the word is out that this is the place to go and market your state," said Hitt, adding that Haley was one of about eight governors at Farnborough this year.

Haley attended the show with one staffer and two security guards, and the state Commerce Department sent a total of nine people, including Patrick. The rest of the delegation was comprised of representatives from regional economic development offices across the state.

Final costs are still being tallied, but Hitt said the trip is projected to cost taxpayers just over \$106,000.

That's far less than Haley's 2011 Paris Air Show trip, which critics called a taxpayer-funded junket and vacation. That trip, which also included Haley's husband, cost taxpayers \$160,000 through Commerce Department spending alone, a figure that included expensive hotel rooms and, for the first time, renting a chalet for events and to rub elbows with companies the state wooed.

Michael Haley, who did not go on this year's trip, reimbursed the state for \$1,440

Boeing Relationship Opens Doors For SC

Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

for his costs on his 2011 trip to Paris. Members of the South Carolina delegation attended a reception during this year's Farnborough trip, but Hitt said Thursday no taxpayer dollars were used.

"We had the right people on the ground to do what we needed to do ... and we're very satisfied with the outcome," Hitt said.

Source URL (retrieved on 09/02/2014 - 6:44pm):

<http://www.impomag.com/news/2012/07/boeing-relationship-opens-doors-sc>