

## 4th Annual Manufacturing Summit Looks Forward to “The Road Ahead”

Mississippi State University’s Franklin Furniture Institute held its fourth annual summit, “The Road Ahead” April 23 at MSU’s Hassell H. Franklin Furniture Institute in Starkville. The Mississippi Manufacturers Association was a sponsor of the event, and MMA’s President and CEO, Jay C. Moon, CEcD, FM, HLM, moderated a panel discussion on Workforce Development: Opportunities and Solutions.

Bill Martin, director of the Franklin Furniture Institute, said, “In today’s global economy, manufacturers must stay abreast of local and global trends, issues associated with manufacturing and potential solutions to problems. Our purpose is to target specific things that are current in today’s business and transfer knowledge to the attendees.”

Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves gave the keynote address for the summit. The Magnolia State can better encourage capital investment through improved education, low taxes and balanced budgets, he said.

Reeves spent more than half his keynote speech emphasizing the importance of education at all levels: from kindergarten through 12th-grade, through community college and university, and as part of workforce skills enhancement.

“As leaders in our communities and leaders in our state, we need to talk about the value of education,” he said. “We’ve got to become more efficient to ensure we’re doing a good job of educating our kids.

“We need more high school graduates. We need more kids going to our community colleges and learning the skills that they can then provide for the workforce. Additionally, we need more college graduates in our state,” Reeves said. “Everybody in our state must value education.”

Reeves also stressed the importance of lightening the tax burden for Mississippi businesses to make them more competitive in the Southeast, throughout the U.S. and all over the world.

“We want to make sure every business correctly and lawfully pays its taxes, but not in a way that puts an undue burden on them,” he said.

Finally, using recurring revenues to pay recurring expenses is a critical part of maintaining a balanced budget without raising taxes, he said. Efficient spending of the resources already being acquired is very important.

Workforce Development panel members, which Moon moderated, were:

- Mark Henry, executive director, Mississippi Department of Employment Security .
- James Williams, vice president of Economic and Community Service, Itawamba Community College.
- Edmond Hughes, vice president of human resources & administration, Ingalls Shipbuilding.



MMA President and CEO Jay C. Moon moderates the Manufacturing Summit panel “Workforce Development: Opportunities and Solutions” in Starkville April 23.

Other participants included:

- Gov. Phil Bryant via a video presentation.
- U.S. Congressman Alan Nunnelee (R-1).
- MSU president Mark E. Keenum.
- Jack McDougle, founder and CEO of the BluTre Strategies consulting firm, discussing the impact of competition on state and national furniture industries.
- Bill Perdue and Andy Counts of the American Home Furnishings Alliance, discussing the regulatory environment and overarching furniture-manufacturing concerns.
- Bruce Lambert, executive director of the Institute for Trade and Transportation Studies, moderating a panel discussion on transportation and logistics related to furniture manufacturing. Mike Tagert, Mississippi Department of Transportation Commissioner for the Northern District, and Mary Ann Moon, CEcD, chairman of the University of Southern Mississippi's Center for Logistics, Trade and Transportation Advisory Board and wife of MMA President and CEO Jay Moon, served on this panel.
- Greg Brinkman, senior vice president of supply chain at Badcock Home Furnishings, examining discuss collaborative strategies for manufacturers and suppliers.
- Pepper Crutcher, a partner with Balch and Bingham LLP, explaining how the Affordable Care Act is impacting the furniture industry.

The Furniture Summit is sponsored by MSU's Franklin Furniture Institute, America Home Furnishing Alliance and Mississippi Manufacturers' Association, as well as the MSU Extension Service and the Forest and Wildlife Research Center.

*Watch the [WCBI-TV report](#) on the 4th annual Manufacturing Summit held April 23 at the Franklin Furniture Institute in Starkville.*