

Secretary Of Labor Talks Workforce Development At STIHL Facility

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Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia visits a STIHL manufacturing facility to talk about workforce development.

STIHL Inc. hosted U.S. Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia, the Hampton Roads Chamber, and local business leaders earlier this month for a roundtable

discussion highlighting workforce development and the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

"We have about 7 million vacant jobs and about 6 million people looking for them," said Secretary Scalia. "This is a request to businesses to pledge to create job training and education opportunities for workers as STIHL has done by joining the 430 companies across the country that have signed on to the Pledge to America's Workers."

In response to the growing skills gap, STIHL Inc. is involved in several different workforce development initiatives, including an apprentice program, dual-enrollment program, STEM sponsorships, and an annual manufacturing technology summer camp for high school students.

As part of the visit, Secretary Scalia toured the Virginia Beach, VA-based STIHL Inc. manufacturing facility to see modern manufacturing in action and to learn about workforce development initiatives like STIHL's apprenticeship program. Part of the tour included candid discussions with a STIHL employee who is a recent graduate of the apprentice program and employees from several departments where skilled trades are highly regarded and sought-after, including machining, assembly and injection molding.

Bjoern Fischer, STIHL Inc. president, commented, "We must work together to identify our needs and find solutions. That is why I am encouraged to see the leadership from Secretary Scalia and the Labor Department. They have an unwavering commitment to the American workforce, as do we here at STIHL."

"A challenge we face now in our region is there are not enough young, skilled professionals to fill newly created jobs," said Bryan Stephens, Hampton Roads Chamber president and CEO. "I am excited to see the Labor Department recognize the skills gap and provide young workers with the necessary tools to succeed in our 21st-century economy."

STIHL's operations in Virginia have grown since its start in 1974, with only 50 employees assembling one model of chain saw. Today, more than 2,000 employees are working in over 1-million-square-feet of operating space at STIHL Inc., producing over 80 models of outdoor power equipment, including battery-powered units. The manufacturing facility uses the latest in advanced technology to manufacture millions of powerheads and accessories a year to be sold through a network of more than 9,000 authorized local STIHL dealers, and exported to more than 80 countries around the world.