



JOSH MANDEL

STATE TREASURER OF OHIO

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By Heather Rutz

LIMA — A new training center at Rhodes State College is an example of what Ohio needs more of, filling the gap of workforce development, Treasurer Josh Mandel said Thursday.

Mandel visited the Mitsubishi Electric Training Center at Rhodes State, learning about the public-private partnership that led to the center. Training using the Mitsubishi programmable logic controllers and human machine interface is available only one other place, at Mitsubishi's headquarters in Illinois.

Mandel said he is "deeply concerned" that not enough young people are choosing skilled manufacturing as a career, and said high schools can do a better job of steering students in that direction. Mandel advocated starting with bringing back industrial arts, or shop class, which some districts have abandoned, he said.

Ohio's economy can be strengthened by recommitting to advanced manufacturing, "jobs that put product out the door," Mandel said. The Rhodes-Mitsubishi partnership is an example of how to support that, he said.

Mandel said his concern for workforce development stems from his economic development concerns as the state's treasurer and chief financial officer, especially when it comes to development programs the Treasurer's Office manages.

"One of my main duties and jobs is to protect jobs in Ohio and create an environment for economic development," Mandel said.

"We will have a strong economy, and a strong tax base when small businesses grow into medium-sized businesses and medium sized businesses grow into large. The only way that's going to happen is if people who are hired have tools in their tool belt with those skilled trades."

Skilled workers use the technology to build vehicles and parts, especially for Honda. Because of Honda's assembly plant in Marysville and surrounding suppliers, there are more than 10,000 programmable logic controllers being used in an eight county area, said Executive Director for Workforce and Economic Development Matt Kinkley.

Those workers can now receive the same training they would in Chicago, while staying close to their home and work and minimizing travel and training costs.

Rhodes used capital funding awarded through the state Controlling Board and some donated equipment and software from Mitsubishi to create the space. Rhodes now has plans to increase the kinds of courses offered and expand from Mitsubishi to other brands of controllers used by different companies.

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