

Business Group Sees Better Days Ahead

by Jim Stickford

Business Leaders for Michigan (BLM) has some good news – the economy of Southeast Michigan is poised to grow, and to grow faster than the U.S. economy as a whole.

BLM is the state's business roundtable, comprising the chairpersons, CEOs or most senior executives of the state's largest job providers and universities. Together, its members power one-quarter of the state's economy and educate nearly one-half of the state's university students.

Kelly Chesney, vice president of communications for BLM, said the organization on Feb. 5 released the results of a poll of its members on the future of the state's economy and the future of the U.S. economy.

The poll stated that 60 percent of BLM members are planning to increase hiring in Michigan in the next six months. Nearly two-thirds said they've added jobs in the state in the past 12 months.

"More business leaders (55 percent) believe Michigan's

economy will grow over the next six months and none believe it will get worse," the poll stated. "Yet when it comes to the national economy, 68 percent of business leaders forecast the American economy will be about the same over the next six months, and only 17 percent forecast that it will grow."

The poll also stated that more Michigan business leaders, about 80 percent, believe the state's economy will grow over the next 18 months and no one polled said that it would shrink. Only 57 percent of business leaders said the American economy will grow in the next 18 months and 15 percent said they believe it would actually contract.

The poll indicated that 66 percent of those in BLM added jobs to their companies in 2012 and 60 percent believe they will add jobs in 2013.

Chesney said the poll is conducted on a quarterly basis. There are more than 80 members in BLM. Members include Dan Akerson, CEO of GM; Gerard Anderson, CEO of DTE Energy; Mary Sue Coleman, president of

the University of Michigan; Daniel Gilbert, chairman and founder of Quicken Loans; William Clay Ford Jr., executive chairman of Ford; Allan Gilmour, president of Wayne State University; James Hackett, CEO of Steelcase; Roger Penske, chairman of the Penske Corporation.

"Overall, our members are more optimistic about Michigan," said Chesney.

"I think the reason is that the state has gotten its house in order. State finances have been stabilized and there's even some money in the state's rainy day fund."

Members believe it's easier to do business in the state, Chesney said.

But the discipline seen in the Michigan government hasn't been seen on a national level, contributing to members' belief that the overall U.S. economy won't do as well as the Michigan economy over the next 18 months, Chesney said.

"The optimism expressed over the state economy is not shared with the U.S. economy," Chesney said.

Ford to Produce EcoBoost Engine in North America

To meet rising consumer demand for the award-winning 2.0-liter EcoBoost engine, Ford Motor Company will invest nearly \$200 million and add 450 new jobs at its Cleveland Engine Plant.

"This is our One Ford plan at its best – giving customers the power of choice to decide which fuel-efficient engine is best tailored to their needs," said Joe Hinrichs, Ford president of The Americas. "Cleveland Engine Plant was the first to produce EcoBoost engines and will continue to be a cornerstone of Ford's strategy to deliver affordable fuel economy for millions."

The hiring builds on the creation of more than 8,100 salaried and hourly jobs in the U.S. last year, including 1,000 in-sourced hourly positions. Ford is more than halfway to its goal of creating 12,000 hourly jobs in the U.S. by 2015 to support new products and investment. Additionally, the

company announced last month it plans to hire 2,200 salaried workers in the U.S. in 2013 to fill jobs in such key areas as Product Development, Manufacturing and IT. Production of the 2.0-liter EcoBoost for North America is currently based in Valencia, Spain. The investment in Cleveland will shift North American production to Ohio, while Ford's Valencia Engine Plant will remain the exclusive production location of the

2.0-liter EcoBoost for Ford of Europe-built vehicles. Valencia will continue to produce and ship parts for these engines to North America.

Overall employment at the Valencia plant will not be impacted. The Valencia Engine Plant will transfer some employees to Valencia Assembly Plant to support increased production for C-MAX, Kuga, Transit Connect and Tourneo Connect.



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