

Mike Hammer

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Testimony on Business Challenges:

- Labor – employee retention is a real concern. New employees entering the work force today need to develop stronger mental toughness and to accept responsibility. Today’s workers are not conditioned to make sacrifices and earn advancement. If they are willing to put in the effort, we will teach and train them the skills needed to learn and advance their career and improve their standard of living.
 - Possible solution – this is a difficult one because I think the responsibility ultimately lies with the parents. However, if the schools could provide training to prepare students for real life experiences (soft skills), I think that would help.
 - Good companies will find a solution. The solution is more automation and ultimately reducing the number of workers needed. Legislators can help prepare new workers for the advancing technologies with investment in more STEM resources in schools.
- Supply Chain Disruptions – soaring prices and extremely long lead times to secure operating supplies and machine repair parts.
 - Possible solution – PA’s recent changes to lower the corporate income tax rate should definitely help spur more investment in the state and domestically. There is also a need to continue streamlining PA’s regulatory agencies (Environmental, Energy, etc.) to help companies move quickly and react to market changes. More manufacturing in PA and domestically will help reduce lead times and dependence on foreign suppliers.
- Freight – dependable carriers domestically and flow improvements at the shipping ports will help reduce shipping delays to our customers and profit erosion due to escalating costs.
 - Possible solution – support investment in roads, bridges and other infrastructure to prepare for future changes in the freight industry (autonomous trucks). Also, support investment in Philadelphia’s ship yard to allow for efficient exporting via containers. Today we use Newark, NJ and Baltimore, MD as our primary ports for exporting (cost and ease of doing business).

In addition to the 3 items mentioned above, there are 3 challenges we face locally in rural Pennsylvania:

- Employee needs for affordable and reliable childcare facilities. Many employees have left the workforce to care for children and have not returned. Providing tax breaks or incentives to parents and childcare facilities could possibly help.
- Affordable housing – decent housing for middle-income earners or market-rate apartments makes it difficult to attract/recruit people to live near our facility.
- Natural gas infrastructure – investment is needed to improve the amount of natural gas flowing to rural areas during peak demand periods. During the winter months, we occasionally run into curtailments that limit our production.