Government shutdown causing uncertainty among manufacturers

By SCOTT WHIPPLE
STAFF WRITER

Unpredictability and uncertainty surround manufacturers in Connecticut due to the ongoing government shutdown.

Approximately 4,600 small manufacturing firms in the state employ more than 166,000 workers. Most of these firms obtain half or more of their business either directly or indirectly from the defense department or other federal government agencies. During the shutdown, the feds won't be placing orders and this can eventually affect a company's bottom line.

Companies may have received government orders, but there's no certainty they will be paid.

Roughly 9,000 federal workers in Connecticut — and thousands more who contract with the federal government — could be furloughed during the shutdown.

U.S. Rep. Elizabeth Esty, D-5th District, said Friday manufacturing firms working with Sikorsky can expect to be affected by the shutdown.

"The consequences go way beyond the 800,000 federal workers," Esty said, "due to the furloughing of 45 inspectors of military equipment. These inspectors need to be on location to supervise the manufacturing process. However, they have been deemed 'nonessential.' As a result, [if the shutdown continues] Sikorsky will have to lay off 2,000 workers in Connecticut next week. If the shutdown continues for a month that will result in laying off 5,000 employees nationwide until they get their inspectors back."

Esty said smaller firms in central Connecticut that have aerospace contracts with Sikorsky and Pratt & Whitney could be affected. Jonal Manufacturing in Meriden has defense and aerospace contracts. "They are starting to put stuff on hold," she said.

Several private companies, who have good-faith contracts to supply the military, have performed their work and now can't get paid. That's the kind of ripple effect this shutdown is having, Esty says.

"We've got 89 employees, manufacture precision tubing for microwave energy, and we're very dependent on military," James McGregor vice president and general manager of Cheshire-based Microtech told Channel 8.

Esty said the shutdown would end if Congress were allowed to vote for CR (Continuing Resolution) support for spending authority. "If Speaker John Boehner would put this before the House today, it would pass and be signed by the president and the federal government could reopen its doors tomorrow."

A continuing resolution is legislation used by Congress to fund government agencies if a formal appropriations bill has not been signed into law by the end of the Congressional fiscal year.

University of Connecticut economist. Steven Lanza held a press conference last Monday to talk about the effect of the shutdown.

Lanza warned that protracted debates and squabbles over the budget and debt limits have raised the level of political uncertainty resulting in real economic consequences. He said that a prolonged shutdown could cost 2,000 jobs statewide, including both layoffs and jobs not created and filled.

Sherwood Griffing, vice president of sales and business development for Tak Enterprises of Bristol, said his company is not likely to be affected by the shutdown unless it trickles down to cutbacks in government medical programs.

Tak is a manufacturer of wire and narrow strip processing machinery used in surgical procedures.

Scott Whipple can be reached at (860) 225-4601, ext. 319 or swhipple@newbritainherald.com.

THIS WEEK'S MEETINGS

PLYMOUTH
Wednesday, Plymouth Board of Education, regular monthly meeting, Terryville High School Cafeteria, 33 North Harwinton Ave., Terryville, 7 p.m.

From left, Brimal B. Patel, MD, medical director of the Bristol Hospital Sleep Center; Marvin McMillen, MD, FACS, MACP, the hospital's chairman of surgery, and Stephanie Adkins, RN, MSN, CCRN, operations manager of the intensive care unit, respiratory therapy, and the sleep center.

Bristol Hospital staff celebrate sleep center accreditation

BRISTOL — Staff from Bristol Hospital and Health Care Group Inc, celebrated the accreditation of the Bristol Hospital Sleep Center by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine Tuesday.

The accreditation lasts for five years. According to a hospital press release, the AASM is committed to ensuring that those in the field of sleep medicine provide excellent health care and enhance the awareness of sleep as an important element for health, public safety and quality of life.

Since opening in 2011, the Bristol Hospital Sleep Center has served more than 700 patients.

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