



Stewart Industries, Inc.  
150 McQuiston Drive  
Battle Creek, MI 49015  
Phone (269) 660-9290  
Fax (269) 660-0421

## PRESS RELEASE

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Battle Creek Enquirer - Battle Creek, Mich.

Author: Elizabeth Willis

Date: April 7, 2010

### Economic Recovery Tour Starts In B.C.

A senior adviser to U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke visited Battle Creek on Tuesday to kick off a national campaign to support businesses and create jobs.

Rick Wade, deputy chief of staff for the U.S. Department of Commerce, toured Stewart Industries Inc. Later, he met with master of business administration students in Battle Creek's Western Michigan University degree program.

Stewart Industries assembles automotive products mainly for Toyota, Honda and Chrysler in a 60,000-square-foot building at 150 McQuiston Drive. It has about 60 employees and, with company President Erick Stewart at the helm, is a member of the Michigan Minority Business Development Council. On June 1, the company will have been in business for 10 years.

Wade offered Stewart Industries managers the Commerce Department's assistance in expanding their business.

As the auto industry faltered last year, the company reduced its staff from 107 associates in January 2009 to 58 current employees, including about 12 temporary workers, company Vice President Steve Bishop said.

"They've had some challenges as a result of the economic downturn, but they're still open, and this is a good example of a company that we want to be aware of that we can partner with and help grow and expand," Wade said.

Bishop said Stewart Industries over the past two years has invested in efforts to bid on government contracts but has failed to win any. He believes bigger companies are hesitant to work with smaller ones, especially when the smaller bidder has no prior government experience.

Wade said the Commerce Department wants to work with businesses to help them win competitive contracts and connect with other businesses.

"It can be a challenging and daunting progress," Wade said. "There's all this government bureaucracy and tape to do business in. We are working internally to streamline that process. With all of the agencies at the Commerce Department, we can help them navigate that process."

Bishop said he was pleased to learn help was available, for example, in the form of grants for capital investments and renewable energy technologies.

"I don't think that we were aware that the Department of Commerce had such services available," he said. "So we are certainly going to explore that opportunity."

Later on Tuesday, Wade addressed business students at Western Michigan University's Battle Creek campus. He called them the future entrepreneurs needed to spur an economy left stagnant over the last decade.

"It's time for us to reinvest and refocus on the fundamentals that have always made this country great: research, innovation and a culture of entrepreneurship that values risk-taking and discovery," he said.

Elizabeth Willis can be reached at 966-0684 or [ewillis@gannett.com](mailto:ewillis@gannett.com).