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Gov. Snyder Speaks Out on How Highly Skilled Immigrants Can Play Huge Role in Revitalizing Michigan's Economy

Area Development Online News Desk (07/18/2011)

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Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder made it clear that highly skilled immigrants are an integral part of his state's past--and a big part of its future--during his keynote address at the landmark "Immigration and Michigan's Economic Future"

conference held July 18 at Wayne State University.

"Michigan's been in a crisis and continues to be in a crisis," said Gov. Snyder. "Now is the time to be proactive. One of the keys to Michigan's future is to look back to our past and one of the keys to our past...(is) the topic of immigration."

Presented in collaboration with Global Detroit and New Michigan Media

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philanthropic, academic and community leaders.

The Detroit event marked the first time Gov. Snyder spoke at length on this topic. He already has embraced immigration as a way to repopulate Michigan and boost the economy through his new Global Michigan Initiative, which invites highly skilled immigrants to Michigan to create businesses. "It's a job generator in the sense if you get foreign nationals coming to be entrepreneurs and innovators, in a lot of cases they'll end up partnering with people we already have here and establish a business," Gov. Snyder said after introducing the program. "It helps reduce unemployment for all of us by putting the right people in the process."

Over the past decade immigrants to Michigan have been nearly three times as likely to start a new business as individuals born in the United States, according to research provided by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Michigan also ranks third in the country with nearly one-third of its hi-tech startups in the last decade having at least one immigrant as a key founder.

Steve Tobocman, director of Global Detroit, said the conference was a terrific opportunity for the region to "put itself on the map as the most welcoming city and state in America....[and] will mark the first step in Michigan's path to national leadership in this area. We are on the cusp of launching a welcoming strategy that re-connects Detroit and the state to the innovative, industrious, and entrepreneurial spirit that guided the auto pioneers of a century ago."

Congressman Hansen Clarke said "immigration can help save Detroit's economy." To support that view, he announced plans introduce legislation before the end of August to make it easier for foreign investors to raise the money to establish new businesses in Detroit.

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg also participated via video teleconference in the conference's opening panel "Can Immigrants Save Detroit?" He is Co-Chair of the Partnership for a New American

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economy and create American jobs.

"In New York City and in big cities and small towns across the country we've seen that immigrants are an economic engine ; [they] start companies that are the cornerstones of our economy and the corner stores of our neighborhoods," said Bloomberg in earlier comments on the topic. "If America's leaders are serious about helping the economy and creating jobs, then we should be doing more to attract and keep the world's best talent."

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