



## Dubie pushes state business, jobs

By CHRIS GAROFALO

BRATTLEBORO -- Lt. Gov. Brian Dubie toured several area businesses Wednesday as part of his Jobs Tour around the state.

The four-term lieutenant governor and Republican front-runner in the gubernatorial race visited Brattleboro one week after launching his tour in Rutland and Waterbury. Dubie visited Vermont Circuits, Allard Lumber, GS Precision and the Brattleboro Development Credit Corp.

While trekking around the state, Dubie said he is listening to employers discuss how they plan to retain existing jobs and expand opportunities for future growth.

The overwhelming concerns he said he hears from business leaders is centered on taxes.

"The first thing I hear loud and clear is taxes," he said in an interview with the Reformer. "I have heard literally from small businesses that say they are hanging on by their fingernails, many of which are disappointed that during the last legislative session the Legislature chose to increase taxes."

Lawmakers need to understand their actions, such as increasing taxes during a recession, sends a message to businesses, he added.

"We need more than lip service, we need an understanding in Montpelier of our challenges," said Dubie.

Dubie said he has extolled Vermont businesses since he took office, but retaining and attracting employment opportunities requires the state to take an aggressive approach.

And seeing a recent Forbes Magazine article that ranked Vermont the 47th most business-friendly state does not help that case either, he said.

The magazine graded Vermont near the bottom (in front of only Wisconsin, Michigan and Rhode Island) for 2009, 11 spots down from its previous ranking.

Dubie attributes the significant drop in legislators' refusal to reduce state spending and downsize Vermont's government.

"Actions have consequences and raising taxes in a recession, as the Legislature did last year, is not leadership. It sends the message that Vermont is closed for business. When our small businesses grow, we create the revenue that funds all the great things that we value in our state," said Dubie.

"There is no bigger cheerleader for Vermont than me," he said. "But we simply must do better than 47th. Making Vermont the best state in New England to work and do business must be Priority No. 1."

More recently, Dubie heard from a Vermont business with locations in New Hampshire. The business owner said New Hampshire shows up with a wheelbarrow when he seeks to expand while Vermont builds walls, according to Dubie.

"That's unacceptable, we need to encourage our Vermont employers, our small businesses. We need to retain them, we need to serve them, we need to work in partnership and collaborate with them to grow Vermont companies."

In order to move the Green Mountain State in a direction to better retain and expand businesses, Dubie has similar proposals to those of Gov. James Douglas.

Dubie favors sunseting certain taxes currently in place, such as the capital gains exemption and estate tax to put Vermont on a sustainable path in terms of spending. He also calls for changes in the state's regulatory environment, improving the resources to streamline the process through Act 250, such as exempting businesses wanting to start up in a zoned industrial park.

"And there are many other opportunities for us to do things smarter and to work to use our resources more wisely and still protect our environment," he said.

In addition, Vermont has to build out its broadband and communications infrastructure.

"That is something I've just heard loud and clear at every stop this morning," he said.

An accessible and reliable communications system is needed in every town, Dubie added.

"That's a critical component of retaining Vermont companies and attracting employees that want to come from other parts of our country to live in this great state," he said.

But it's really going to rely on Montpelier lawmakers to do their part as well, he added.

Dubie's jobs tour is his most public campaign around Vermont since he announced in October that he would run for the Republican gubernatorial nomination.

Five Democratic candidates are also seeking to replace Douglas, who decided not to run for re-election.

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