

Threatened by competition from other states, the Missouri House is moving on a bill aimed at keeping manufacturing jobs here and, perhaps, even grow some more. No one believes Ford Motor Company will leave Claycomo in Kansas City, but everyone in Jefferson City is worried that Ford might shift production of a new product line to another state. The Manufacturing Jobs Act, HCS HB 1675, hopes to prevent that from happening. Representative Tim Flook claims Kentucky already has \$100 million in incentives on the table for Ford. Flook says several other states are competing for the new line of production Ford will begin after it ends production of the Ford Escape at Claycomo. At stake: as many as 4,000 high-paying jobs. Representative Sam Komo tells colleagues if they want to observe the devastating impact plant shut-downs can have on a region, they should visit his St. Louis area district reeling from the loss of two Chrysler plants. The bill has more than Claycomo in mind. It would allow any qualifying manufacturer to retain half of its withholding taxes from retained jobs for 10 years. The facility could also qualify for additional economic development assistance from the state, including incentives from the Quality Jobs Program. The measure has the backing of Gov. Nixon who, along with State Economic Development Director David Kerr, recently met in Detroit with Ford CEO Alan Mulally. The bill passed on a 143-to-6 vote. One more favorable vote sends the bill to the Senate.

Senator McCaskill has just visited Afghanistan and Pakistan as part of a Congressional Delegation trip. McCaskill headed to the Middle East to visit Missouri troops, focus on oversight of government contracting, and discuss national security. She says she's hopeful about the new offensive in Afghanistan. A big difference, she says, is the sense of internationalism. McCaskill says she caught up with Missouri troops working on bringing equipment from Iraq to Kuwait, where it's sorted, inventoried and either sent on to Afghanistan for use there or returned to the U.S. McCaskill's Middle East trip itinerary includes: a meeting with Afghanistan's Defense Minister, a briefing with U.S. Forces-Afghanistan command, the Joint Contracting Command in Afghanistan, and LOGCAP officials, meetings with Pakistani Prime Minister and Pakistani Chief of Army Staff General, as well as a visit to an Afghan police training center.