

CalChamber Hosts Governor of Sonora, Mexico



(August 17, 2007) The Honorable Eduardo Bours Castelo, Governor of Sonora, Mexico, summarized for a California Chamber of Commerce International Luncheon Forum audience yesterday why California should invest in his state.

Among the more than 75 guests who greeted Governor Bours were California government officials and businesspeople from California and Mexico, including representatives of agriculture, transportation, manufacturing and technology.

Mexico continues to be California's number one export market. California exports to Mexico increased in 2006 from \$17.7 billion to \$19.6 billion. Mexico purchases 15 percent of all California exports.

California's exports to Mexico are driven by computers and electronic products, which account for 27 percent of all California exports to Mexico. Key exports to Mexico showing growth in 2006 include processed foods and transportation equipment.

Border State

Sonora's geographical location makes the state a natural hub linking the Americas, as well as the Pacific Rim. Sonora is also a natural gateway to Mexico, the United States and the rest of the world.

"We are a border that has a lot of commercial traffic going through it," said Bours. "More than 90 percent of the agricultural products traded between the U.S and Mexico cross the Sonoran border. We have five international airports, 1,250 miles of railroad and 22,500 miles of highway infrastructure. Sonora also has a the deepwater seaport of Guaymas, which offers a wonderful opportunity to export to Asia and other countries."

Export-oriented agribusiness, manufacturing, automotive industry, mining, tourism and technology are all staples of the Sonoran economy, with room for growth.

"We have fiber optics in our state, we have telecommunications, which allow us to provide services to all kinds of companies. In fact, we have 43 industrial business parks in 17 different cities throughout Sonora to serve the business community," Bours said.

Governor Bours addressed the steps that the Sonoran government has taken to make the state a hospitable place for business.

"We've truly transformed our state, making legislative and legal changes," Bours said. "As a businessman, I am convinced that it is the business sector that must generate employment and not the government. The government has to facilitate, so that companies can be successful, but that's what government is, it facilitates, it provides the infrastructure, it does the homework, and many times it just has to get out of the way."

Economic Indicators

Sonora is currently renewing its infrastructure and taking down the barriers to investment. In the process, Sonora is becoming one of the most open and globally integrated places for investment, not only in Mexico, but also in the Americas.

"We have more than 2,000 new companies that have established themselves in Sonora," Bours said. "There are 30 aerospace high tech companies and business in Sonora has generated more than 30,000 jobs per year during the last three years."

Sonora has exceeded the national average economic growth, Bours explained. "We are the national leader in Mexico insofar as employment per capita, and have grown in the last three, averaging about six percent a year. We have been able to maintain that number, and this year we believe that we meet this goal again."



(From left) The Honorable Eduardo Bours Castelo, Governor of Sonora, Mexico, CalChamber President Allan Zaremberg and former CalChamber Chair Roger Baccigaluppi, CalChamber Board Member, and Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, RB International.

Sonora's leadership has been nationally recognized; it currently ranks first in training programs to small and medium companies.

"We're very interested in having people invest in Sonora, but we're very interested in having the people of Sonora invest in Sonora," Bours said. "We want our people to be leaders and be successful and become business owners."

People of Sonora

The state's universities and research centers help keep Sonora "ahead of the pack" in innovation and competitiveness. Governor Bours said that the most valuable asset Sonora has is its people.

"We are a state that has a high level of education," Bours said proudly. "Sonora has one of the highest academic levels in Mexico, due to its high expenditure in education. We have 31 universities and eight technological universities. I have no doubt that this is the most important product that Sonora offers."

'Invest in Sonora'

Sonora has strived to bring government and business together to become a driving force behind the region's development, Bours said.

"We are a government that is growing and can promote development, but we are trying to ensure that this development is so that people can improve their life. We are a government that also understands that health public finance is important, but also understand that the result of health public financing means citizens of the state can live better. We need for people to invest in Sonora. Sonora is offering many opportunities and we welcome you with open arms."

Background

This year, Governor Bours presides over the XXV Border Governors Conference, the most important cooperation mechanism of the U.S.-Mexico bilateral relationship. Both California and Sonora are participants in the Border Governors Conference, an entity comprised of the 10 U.S.-Mexico border states' governors who work jointly to address issues such as agriculture, border crossings, education, environment, tourism, economic development, health, energy, water and wildlife.

Governor Bours, born on December 17, 1956 in Ciudad Obregon, Sonora, currently serves as the Governor of Sonora under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Before his election as the 70th Governor of Sonora in July 2003, he represented Sonora as a senator in the Mexican federal government. The World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, also named him a "World Leader of Tomorrow."

Governor Bours graduated from the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education with a degree in industrial engineering and systems engineering. He began his career as a businessman with Grupo Bachoco, a leading agricultural company. Over the years, Bours has served as president of the Consejo Nacional Agropecuario (National Agricultural Council), president and director general of the Del Monte Fresh Company, general coordinator of the Unidad Coordinadora para el Acuerdo Bancario Empresarial (Coordinating Unit for the Banking and Business Agreement), and president of the Consejo Coordinador Empresarial (Business Council). Among his numerous accomplishments, Bours helped negotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 as a representative of the private sector.