

Area Economic Moves Lauded

By GREG BOWEN
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U.S. Rep. Greg Laughlin told Victoria Chamber of Commerce members Monday he was "encouraged by the commitment and the activity of the people of Victoria and the coastal area in trying to turn around our economy."

Also speaking at the luncheon held at Holiday Inn was Shane White of Dallas, legislative manager for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Southern Region, who said the chamber group has been busy in Washington fighting anti-business legislation being pushed by the "very liberal leadership element" in Congress.

In his talk, Laughlin said business-recruiting trips taken by local groups to places like Taiwan are "the sort of reaching out that is extremely desirable."

Businesses overseas are interested in our region because of low labor and land costs and "the work spirit that we have in this area," Laughlin said.

In response to a question regarding emissions from area chemical plants, Laughlin said he hasn't received a single letter or call criticizing any of the local chemical companies for emissions.

"My experience is that the people around here are quite
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Advocate Staff Photo

Shane White, left, a legislative manager U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and U.S. Rep. Greg Laughlin were speakers at Monday's Chamber of Commerce luncheon.

The congressman urged those present to write Texas Senators Phil Gramm and Lloyd Bentsen to encourage them to support funding for improvements to the Victoria Barge Canal and the Red Bluff Canal in Jackson County.

Appropriations for the projects were approved in the house but rejected in the senate, said Laughlin, who called the projects "extremely important to this region."

"We need more work ... to improve our water transportation system in this region," he said, noting that businesses realize water transportation is the cheapest way to move raw materials and finished products. "It's a tremendous asset we've got to take care of and improve," he said.

On the subject of the Victoria veterans clinic, Laughlin said those in the know in Washington say the Victoria veterans clinic is "right on stream. It will be funded and built."

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pleased with the chemical plants," he said. "You can always find people out there who don't like chemical plants and don't want them around and blame them for everything."

The local plants should continue to "put out the good news" about improvements they've made to reduce emissions, he suggested.

Laughlin said he's met more than one chemical company representative in Washington who has expressed concern about problems with anti-chemical-company sentiment in other regions.

"I tell them all they've got to do is get on a plane and fly down here, they'll find that we'll welcome them with wide open arms and we'll be happy to have more neighbors like the companies that we have here."

Laughlin said recent natural gas price decontrol was "an important achievement not only for Texas but for our nation." Increased usage of clean-burning natural gas eases the trade deficit by cutting the need for imported oil and helps the environment to boot, he said.

Laughlin told how he's supporting the natural gas industry by co-sponsoring bills to provide relief to cities and school districts which convert gasoline-powered fleets to "natural gas, propane, butane - the cleaner fuels."