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U.S. Representative Larry Kissell was a popular speaker at a recent gathering in Greensboro for hosiery and textiles executives interested in military procurement opportunities.

Rep. Kissell pulled off a coup unusual for a freshman congressman. He got language inserted in the federal TARP legislation that extends provisions of the Berry Amendment. First adopted at the outset of World War II, the amendment requires the federal procurement offices to purchase from domestic manufacturers. However loopholes in the language have allowed the military to purchase millions of dollars in supplies — including armaments — from companies in foreign countries.

Kissell’s bill has closed some of those loopholes. While most U.S. manufacturers have applauded the provisions, The Hosiery Association has said “the spirit is good but … there are complexities.” THA President Sally Kay also spoke to the Greensboro gathering but did not elaborate on the association’s reservations about Berry.

The retirement of Tony Rand, the powerful leader of the N.C. Senate Democratic caucus, caught veteran observers by surprise. Rand, also chairman of the Senate Rules Committee, controlled the flow of bills in the Chamber. He also determined what bills would never see the light of day in a committee.

Sen. Rand has always delivered on his promise. If he told you that you were in the budget, you were in. He was unflappable and a strong supporter of business interests and higher education. Next to President Pro-Tem Marc Basnight, he was the Senate’s most powerful voice.

Basnight has urged Democrats to support Sen. Martin Nesbit as the next Majority Leader. An Asheville Democrat, Nesbit is regarded as a populist, more liberal than Rand or Basnight. Also seeking the leadership post was Sen. Dan Clodfelter of Charlotte who leans to the liberal side. Clodfelter is a co-chair of the Senate Finance Committee.

Sen. David Hoyle of Gaston County is chairman of Finance and a close associate of Basnight. Don’t be surprised to see him also chair of the Rules Committee.

Rep. Ray Warren, the first Democrat in decades to represent Hickory and Alexander County, has decided two terms in the House is enough. His decision to retire disappointed his Hickory constituents who felt he finally gave them a voice in the House leadership circles.

Warren would have faced Mark Hollo who he defeated four years ago. Hollo is considered a protégé of Rep. Mark Hilton who is linked to the fundamentalist wing of the Republican Party.

WORDS TO REMEMBER: “Partisan politics have no place in economic development.” – Secretary of Commerce Keith Crisco.
Textile Technology Center at Gaston College

19th century technology gave us the textiles industry - the 21st century Textile Technology Center is helping us re-invent it!

Today, tens of thousands work in textile operations across the South, thanks to services from the Textile Technology Center at Gaston College in Belmont, North Carolina. We help develop and test new products for specialized markets, support the Made-in-the-USA brand with our quality control innovations, and have worked to make the textile industry leaner and more efficient.

For more information on how we can help you, contact John Anderson, Director
704.837.2525 or anderson.john@gaston.edu

Gaston College
www.gaston.edu
To those who have concluded that textiles manufacturing is dead or dying, here is a message from some prominent insiders:

“Our industry is not dead. We’re different.”

Jim Leonard, who organized a military procurement conference in Greensboro November 10, emphasized this to over 200 textiles and hosiery representatives. The speakers backed him up with their presentations.

Leonard, a former undersecretary for textiles in the U.S. Department of Commerce, now works in the N.C. Department of Commerce which sponsored the sellout gathering. International Market Solutions was the co-sponsor.

Military procurement is a $2.4 billion a year business for textiles and hosiery manufacturers. And it’s not just apparel and socks. Helmets, armaments, shelters, medical supplies and more are provided by the textiles industry. For some companies, government contracts have kept the doors open.

It was fitting that the opening session speaker was Dr. Blanton Godfrey, dean of the College of Textiles at N.C. State University. Blanton’s presentation could have been described as a Star Wars theme for textiles, including fibers that act as artificial muscles or high-tech garments for the visually-impaired with transistors to warn of potential collisions.

Research and possibilities in textiles have excited a new generation of future executives, Blanton said. Enrollment in the College of Textiles is over 1,000 graduate and undergraduates reflecting a 57 percent increase over the past five years.

As a result of support and innovations coming from the College of Textiles,
North Carolina’s industry is poised to receive contracts for hundreds of millions of dollars, according to Scott Dorney, executive director of the N.C. Military Business Center based in Fayetteville.

Government procurement is to give priority to U.S. domestic manufacturers under terms of the Berry Amendment just recently added to the $700 billion TART appropriation approved by Congress. The amendment was in language drafted by U.S. Rep. Larry Kissell, a freshman member of Congress from the Sixth N.C. District. Kissell was among the speakers at the conference.

Dorney said that because of the Berry Amendment over 58 percent of textiles and hosiery procurements come from domestic sources. Several contractors were attending the conference.

“The military buys everything that’s legal to buy,” said Dorney. This includes purchases by Veterans Administration hospitals, Homeland Security operations, and other Defense Department agencies.

Dorney said contracts do not come automatically to bidders. “You must market to the federal government,” he stressed. He urged the representatives to develop company marketing materials for federal offices and to obtain codes for bidding. He recommended interested companies to contact Teresa Bouchoonet (828-349-3878), business development specialist, for guidance and support.

Col. Kevin Stoddard, deputy director, Clothing and Textile Procurement Defense Supply Center, Philadelphia, focused his comments on the importance of domestic manufacturers in the supply chain.

“You are as important in our mission as the soldier on the front line,” he declared. “Your failure to produce will be felt on the battlefield.” He said North Carolina is a force to be reckoned with and “it is important that you get to know us.”

Stoddard said textiles and clothing procurements in FY 2010 will be $2.5 billion and probably more. He said 50 percent of procurements are from small businesses with the other 50 percent from large companies and distributors.

Lowest prices in bids do not always result in contracts, he advised. Low prices can be a signal the bidder does not understand the complexities or the specifications of the advertised product, he added.

Among the successful bidders addressing the conference was Patrick Palmer, executive vice president of Burlington Worldwide, a division of Burlington Industries.

Burlington is a prime vendor for Army dress uniforms made in a plant in Rep. Kissell’s congressional district. Praising Kissell for his interest in military business procurements, Palmer said Kissell had visited the Laurinburg plant three times.

Stressing the importance of the contract and its complexity, Palmer said Burlington quality control personnel will have submitted 40,000 swatches for approval and expects no rejections.
By John Anderson, 
Director, Textile Technology Center

With the basic mission of providing services to the textile industry in the form of new product development assistance and product testing, the Center more than doubled the quantity of services, measured in hours from 12,065 hours in calendar 2008 to 27,000 hours in 2009. The industry clearly found the Textile Technology Center a capable partner despite the economic downturn, and utilized the Center as a shared resource to their advantage to rapidly develop new products and to improve processes.

The Center also entered 2009 with a vision of expanding the breadth of service offerings to the industry, as well as reaching out to emerging segments, and in this endeavor they were particularly gratified with the results.

Several Universities in the region find students flocking to their Merchandising and Design programs. There are growing opportunities for students who want to enter the constantly changing retail, apparel and home fashions industry. Many of these students study textiles as an academic subject, but don’t get the opportunity to see textile processes and testing first hand. The Center pioneered a program in partnership with Johnson and Wales University in Charlotte to provide experiential textile laboratory sessions. J&W Merchandising students spend 16 lab hours at the Textile Technology Center doing hands on identification of fibers, quality testing and observing
processes in action. The University was so pleased with the experience that they expanded the program to include their Providence, RI, Denver CO and Miami, FL based students as well. This October, Winthrop University began a program as well for their Interior Design majors. The outreach will continue in 2010 to other colleges and universities in the region as well as to the Public School system.

“Hand Crafted” and “Locally Grown” are growing areas of textile product differentiation as consumers react to shoddy merchandise sourced globally. As previously reported in Trends, the Center successfully applied for a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and developed a curriculum to assist individuals and co-ops who want to form small scale “community mills” to process locally grown fiber like alpaca, wool and organic cotton. Two four day sessions were held in Belmont, NC in the fall of 2009, and four more are planned for early 2010, along with classes in felting and marketing such products.

As an offshoot of the Community Mill Effort, the Center has become an active partner, along with North Carolina State University, is assisting the emerging sustainable segment of the fiber industry. The Center hosted an Alpaca fiber symposium in April that was attended by individuals from 26 states and Canada. Center Director John Anderson and Textile Testing Specialist Sam Buff were featured speakers at that event and have since been on the program at subsequent conferences at the national level. The Center has invested to develop the capability to process animal fiber to assist in product development an analysis.

The Center is also in an active partnership with two different groups who are looking to develop sustainable fiber operations in the state from plants. One effort is based on developing a polymer from soy by-products. A recent second project is in the feasibility study phase, examining indigenous members of the bamboo family as possible fiber sources and looking at whether such an operation might work in North Carolina. Both of these projects are funded by grants from private foundations and industry.

Training and expanding professional knowledge is part of the mission of the Center as well. In addition to the activities listed above, the Textile Technology Center was the site of the winter technical forum, the summer Marketing forum and the spring and fall regional seminars of the Southern Textile Association, bringing the latest tools and techniques to the manufacturing and technical professionals of the Textile Industry in the North Carolina region. Over 2000 man hours of professional training were delivered through this partnership. In November, the Textile Technology Center hosted the American Fiber Manufacturers Associations Surface group bi-annual meeting, adding a new partner and another 600 hours of training to the industry.

Generous gifts of equipment from industry have assisted the Center in keeping pace with technology and expanding capability. During 2009, a complete chemical analytical lab was donated and installed, along with greatly expanded optical and electron microscopy capability. As the year comes to a close, the Center is finalizing details to enable a donation of polymer and fiber manufacturing equipment to further add to its dimensions to serve the industry on multiple fronts.
A Hickory entrepreneur has turned to apparel and intends to prove that U.S. manufacturing is very much a part of his future.

Joe Foxx’s new enterprise is built around an apparel line which he is marking under the Dirt Ball brand. Foxx said the brand is 100 percent eco-friendly and is aimed at Generation X men and women that enjoy outdoor activities.

Everything is made in America, Foxx insists.

Dirt Ball Fashion LLC contracts with manufacturers throughout the southeast, including North Carolina. The enterprise began with T-shirts and has expanded to include shorts, hats, and other casual shirts.

Since developing the concept for the company and a logo in summer 2008, Foxx says he has learned to appreciate the benefits of a short supply chain. He selects vendors who are quality-driven.

His marketing strategy is to translate sustainability into understandable descriptions. A T-shirt is made of “cotton and two recycled water bottles.” Shorts are produced with 10 recycled plastic bottles (polyester).

Foxx is one of several entrepreneurs who have caught the attention of the Manufacturing Solutions Center which includes the hosiery center. The testing services of the MSC will play an important part in the growth of Dirt Ball, Foxx predicts.

Dirt Ball now is sold from its online website and in specialty sports stores. The enterprise is based in Hickory NC.
Hosiery Firm Expanding Ellerbee N.C. Operations

Knit Rite Co. has announced it will modernize and expand its operations in Ellerbee N.C. that makes specialty socks for diabetics and other medical hosiery products. Gov. Bev Perdue said the company will receive a $24,000 state grant if it adds 24 new jobs paying an average wage of $22,533 – $11.30 an hour.

Knit Rite, based in Kansas, already employs 44 at the Ellerbee site.

Specialty Textile Firm Opens Burlington Plant

VitaFlex, a new company operating in a former Burlington Industries plant in Burlington N.C. has announced it will hire 100 people next year to manufacture elastic, non-woven products. VitaFlex will employ patented technology developed by De-Sheng Tsai who is president and chief scientific officer of the business, a division of Burlington Technologies. The company was formed by former Burlington Industries executives after the textiles giant filed for bankruptcy.

The technology enables lower-cost production of non-woven fabrics which are used in disposable diapers and many other products, according to Susan Heaton, director of sales and marketing.

The first product VitaFlex plans to make is a spray sock which painters wear over their heads to shield them from paint.
The Hosiery Governmental Affairs Council is fired up for 2009.
You should be too. The elections will entail choices.
People who understand what it means to keep a business competitive with
rules that restrict our operations. Taxes that hurt our ability to invest.

It’s time to get fired up. Let your voice be heard in 2009. Join the Hosiery
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## Our 2010 Editorial Calendar

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<th>Topic</th>
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<td><strong>JANUARY</strong></td>
<td>State of the industry. As manufacturing continues to re-invent itself, we look at profiles of companies that may be the wave of the future. We talk to executives that have been part of the transition. We are here, but we are different.</td>
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<td><strong>FEBRUARY</strong></td>
<td>Are textiles and hosiery companies keeping pace with the green economy? Or is it business as usual. Why? Yarn suppliers are interviewed to analyze the demand for sustainable products. Manufacturing Solutions Center activities on behalf of new, green initiatives reported.</td>
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<td><strong>MARCH</strong></td>
<td>Government procurement opportunities and the Berry Amendment. Some industry people tied to the global economy have doubts about the provisions, but domestic niche manufacturers support the initiatives. Stories from companies with contracts for military socks and apparel and other textile products.</td>
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<td><strong>APRIL</strong></td>
<td>State legislators grapple with higher demands for services and shrinking revenues. Cut spending and reduce waste, say taxpayers. But how do you protect schools, healthcare services, and business support such as the Manufacturing Solutions Center? And what can states do to help small businesses? Our legislative agenda is outlined.</td>
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<td><strong>MAY</strong></td>
<td>Manufacturers that have adopted successful strategies in a challenging environment are featured. What has been the role of suppliers in their success? Also, what happened to trade associations serving the supply chain?</td>
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<td><strong>JUNE</strong></td>
<td>Internet sites are changing the landscape. We could have said this in 2000, but the web is a totally new place. Sites like matchforce.com and hundreds of others are making virtual manufacturing a reality. But they also are making the supply chain more efficient and cost-effective.</td>
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<td><strong>JULY</strong></td>
<td>The hosiery and apparel industry has been changed by the growth of sports socks and clothing. Generation X also is embracing the sustainability movement. What is the result when these two trends merge?</td>
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<td><strong>AUGUST</strong></td>
<td>How are retailers reading consumers for back-to-school and fall shopping? Is there a trend that will drive fashion and what is considered essential for the practical shopper</td>
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<td><strong>SEPTEMBER</strong></td>
<td>What will the manufacturing company of the future look like? And what will the people in those operations be doing as new technologies emerge. How are domestic manufacturers using new strategies to reduce production costs? Will marketing change priorities for packaging?</td>
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<td><strong>OCTOBER</strong></td>
<td>The Textile Technology Centers and the Manufacturing Solutions Center are now the focal points for industry services. Research and development, marketing, and personnel training continue to be priorities. In-depth reports on their activities and projections for the future are included in this special issue.</td>
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<td><strong>NOVEMBER</strong></td>
<td>Packaging innovations and retailer SKUs are examined. Trends that are driving women’s hosiery including socks and sheers are the subject of background reports.</td>
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<td><strong>DECEMBER</strong></td>
<td>Outlook for 2011 and state of industry from domestic and international perspective. The impact of mid-term elections as it relates to industry initiatives and funding for technology centers.</td>
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Officially we have been the Center for Emerging Manufacturing Solutions. (CEMS). Our mission is to help traditional manufacturing in North Carolina succeed in a changing environment. The Hosiery Technology Center remains a core service. But furniture, packaging, plastics, and other industries that helped build North Carolina’s economy are now priorities.

If our official name is too much to remember, just call us the Manufacturing Solutions Center. We are ready to assist you with new products, new manufacturing strategies, new markets.

Traditional manufacturers have an old history with our state. But they are an important force in the new economy.