

Business

N.C. businesses may get boost in foreign market

From Associated Press reports

RALEIGH — North Carolina businesses struggling to solve the "mystery" of overseas marketing can get help from state government if the Legislature approves funds for a new Export Finance Assistance Office, said Gov. Jim Martin.

Primarily because of the dollar's plunge, "the time has never been better for American businesses to get into exporting," Martin said.

North Carolina was one of a few

states with a foreign trade surplus the first three months of this year, he said. The state's exports exceeded imports by 14 percent — \$159.5 million. North Carolina leads the Southeast and ranks 14th nationally, exporting more than \$4.5 billion worth of manufactured products annually.

But many companies have trouble getting started overseas, Martin said. "Most North Carolina trade leaders agree that the problem of export financing assistance is now the most

significant limitation to North Carolina trade development."

The governor announced his proposal and proclaimed May 22 to 29 "World Trade Week in North Carolina" at a news conference with business leaders and officials of the state Department of Commerce and its federal counterpart.

The state program is part of a national effort called "Export Now." Monday's news conference featured film clips of speeches by President

Reagan and other officials endorsing the program launched on a national level this year.

The North Carolina Export Finance Assistance Office, for which Martin is asking \$106,000 in 1988-89 for a three-person staff, would provide "one-on-one assistance to... companies seeking export finance credit and related credit insurance," he said.

Through contracts with the U.S. Foreign Credit Insurance Agency and the United States Export-Import Bank, the office would arrange foreign credit insurance for qualifying North Carolina exporters, he said.

It also would work with the state's financial institutions to "assure smooth processing of foreign applications," he said. The office would not be involved in the financing business itself, but would "act as a pipeline for foreign credit insurance," he said.

The most important function of the new office would be "to take the mystery out of export financing," Martin said.

"By working ... with individual firms, the office will help companies that are new to export find their way through the maze of foreign trade financing. For existing exporters, it will smooth what is sometimes a rocky path."

Aside from increasing financing insurance availability, the new office probably will help lower export credit financing rates, said Bill Dunn, deputy state commerce secretary.

When fully operational, the office will "round out a full complement" of export assistance services offered by the Commerce Department, Martin said. The department has five export specialists in Raleigh and has trade representatives in Europe and the Pacific Rim.

State Sen. Franklin Block, D-New Hanover, said last year's \$36 million appropriation to bolster the state's ports was another important factor in boosting North Carolina exports. He urged business leaders at the news conference to increase their shipping from the state's ports at Wilmington and Morehead City.

Study finds indigent care burden should be split among hospitals

From Associated Press reports

RALEIGH — For-profit hospitals charge more and provide less indigent care than nonprofit hospitals in North Carolina, but they pay sizable amounts in taxes, says a new report by the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research.

"Since 1980, more than one-fourth of North Carolina's 164 non-federal hospitals have affiliated in some way with a for-profit corporation," said Lori Ann Harris, a center researcher and co-author of the report.

"Because this is such a significant change in ownership and management of our state's hospitals, we at the center decided to see if the for-profits perform differently," she said.

The center concluded that the state

needs to make available to the public more information about costs and charges of health care services and should develop a policy of allocating the burden of indigent care among hospitals.

The center also recommended that the General Assembly enact a program to support care of indigent patients, suggesting three options: require all hospitals to provide a statutory minimum amount of indigent care; mandate that counties develop and fund their own indigent care programs; or assess all hospitals an amount based on each hospital's

gross patient revenues and use those assessments for a statewide fund for indigent care.

The center studied four areas: costs and charges at the two types of hospitals; indigent care; taxes; and services.

In comparing costs and charges, the center's researchers matched seven investor-owned hospitals with not-for-profit hospitals of similar size, number of employees and admissions and occupancy rates. They then used Medicare cost reports to compare costs to the hospital and charges to the patients.

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